# A NEW APPROACH

TO

# TIRUVASAGAM

BY

Mrs. Ratna Navaratnam

ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY

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# A New Approach to TIRUVASAGAM

By

**Mrs. Ratna Navaratnam** M. A., M. Litt.,
Inspectress of Schools,
**JAFFNA**

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# FOREWORD

By

**Professor A. C. CHETTIAR,** M. A., Ph. D.,

Head of the Department of Tamil

Annamalai University

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Mrs. Ratna Navaratnam has approached "Thiruvacakam', or "the Sacred Utterances" of Manikkavacakar certainly in a new way. The common practice is either to refrain from trying to interpret the words thinking that interpretation of a sacred text is itself a sacrilege or to approach tho book purely from a religious point of view. But the author of this book has attempted to apply the principles of western criticism to this book with success.

The first two chapters serve as an introduction to the subject. The next five chapters outline the contents of the several poems in Tiruvacakam, compare them with similar works of art and examine them in the light of well-known canons of literary criticism. The last chapter shows that poetry of the higher type and religion are aspects of the same truth.

This treatise, which bears testimony to the sound scholarship and critical acumen of the author, is sure to prove a valuable guide in understanding the poetic merit of the book which is "as dear to the hearts of vast multitudes of excellent people in South India as the Psalms of David are to Jews and Christians".

The translation in metrical form, however, with notes and concordance prepared by "the pioneer student of Tamil", the late Dr. G. U. Pope and

published in 1900 by the Clarendon Press Oxford will still remain useful. The present publication is sure to serve as a worthy complement to that work from several points of view.

Mr. M. Shanmugam, M. A., of the Tamil department, who saw through the proofs, in the absence of the author at London, deserves to be thanked.

A. C. CHETTIAR
18-3-51.

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# PREFACE.

Manikkavasagar's Tiruvasagam is a treasure house of sublime beauty and as such is an inexhaustible study. Few feats of the human mind have equalled that of Manikkavasagar's expression of a complete faith and of transporting such into art.

In order to interpret Tiruvasagam as the poetry of Experience, we found it essential to formulate a general theory of Great Poetry, gleaned from the conceptions of poetry advanced by the Eastern and Western schools of thought. In the light of this analysis, we proceeded to give the essence of the poetic beauties of thought and diction in Tiruvasagam, section by section.

Having studied with great interest the sacred literature of the West, including Dante's Divine Comedy the magnificent collection of the works of the Alwars known as Tivya Prabantham, with the commentaries thereon as well as the Thevaram literature, we approached the poem of 'holy utterances' with reverence and studied it as poetry of experience.

The work of translating the poetry of 'Incantation' has never been an easy one and no attempt has been made to translate passages of poetry from the original into English either literally or to run line with the original poem. It was found futile to do so, when an eminent scholar like Dr. Pope had tried and did not achieve the desired results. I have tried to render in *terms of feeling* only, rather than of intellect, those profound experiences of the poet whose communication to our minds, depended on all our relevant feelings

and impulses being raised into the completest harmony. As we have no adequate terminology of feeling, we resort to adapt our static intellectual terms as we may, to the dynamic realities of feeling in our 'free' translation of the poem.

In our study, we have tried to show that an approach through poetry can bring new light to bear upon the great issues that appear in religious experience. The ascent of the soul from the human to the divine, from time to the eternal, from the many to the one-in short the varied experiences of the poet are interpreted by the emotional symbolism liberated by the power of Manikkavasagar's poetry. We have traced how the intense expression of religious feeling is indissolubly linked with the wider connection of emotion in poetry.

An approach has been made to understand the soul of Manikkavasagar by means of his poetry. In the perfection of its fine poetry which we impersonally enter, we behold the perfection of all things and are one with that perfection.

Poetry is the best medium to pay homage to the absolute truth and the reality of the truth makes no sovereign a claim upon poetry that it may well be said that great experience gives rise to great poetry. Thus in Tiruvasagam, all that is offered to the sum of perfection has both the unity of inspiration and the sublime grace of art.

In attempting the impossible, we have no other apology than the one which St. Sekkilar advanced.

அளவுகூட உரைப்பரி தாயினும்
அளவிலாசை துரப்ப அறைகுவேன்.
Though impossible to reach its limits,
Insatiable love drives me to the task.

A

# NEW APPROACH TO TIRUVACAGAM

## INTRODUCTION

### A - GREAT POETRY AND TIRUVACAGAM.

If poetry is the 'resonance of greatness of soul', Tiruvacagam stands unchallenged as one of the finest gems of poetry in the literature of the world. If a poet is 'a scribe of eternal love', Manikkavacagar is one of the world's great poets.

Wherein lies the universal appeal of Tiruvacagam? Some find in it an expression of their personal faith. Others read into it, an interpretation of the system of philosophy termed 'Saiva Siddhanta'. There are quite a few interested critics who study the work for its biographical and historical interest. Yet others there are who delight in its flowing numbers and 'rasas'.

The world's great poems speak the language of immortality and stand the test of literary criticism of all ages, climes and creeds. The theories of Tolkappiar or Bharata, Plato or Aristotle, Coleridge or Bradley can be applied with equal felicity and success, to interpret the poetry of Tiruvacagam. Such is the intangible quality of greatness in a work of art. A man of taste will not ask the meaning of Kalidasa's Meghaduta or Megasandesa or Blake's Songs of Innocence. Its effect penetrates without being able to be held.

We discover an echo of the magnificence of Divine Love, and relish the rapturous bliss of a pilgrim-poet of eternity, while we read Tiruvacagam. Why should we delight in other people's experience? Does Tiruvacagam fulfil our ideals of Great Poetry?

An interpretation of Great Poetry in general is necessary because it will be the 'Open Sesame' to Manikkavacagar's poem, which like Dante's Divine Comedy stands unrivalled as a poem of loftiest human experience.

*What is Art?* Leo Tolstoy in his Essay on Art says that the activity of art consists in transmitting a feeling one has experienced. He believed that art should from the poet's point of view, "transform his experience into expression," and from the reader's point of view, "it is to transform the expression into experience."

According to Plato, art is due to man's natural impulse towards beauty, love, truth, wisdom and goodness. In "*Phaedrus*", he says that the "Absolute Beauty is recognised as a super sensuous and spiritual essence which is discerned by the mind when thrown into ecstasy in its presence." The artist realises Eternal and Infinite Beauty and can hence create forms of beauty more beautiful than are found in the outer world. In "*Symposium*", he defines love as "the instinct of immortality in a mortal creature." Greek philosophy springs from poetry of this order, for in this poetry are contained the germs of all subsequent thought.

*What then is the nature of poetry?* How does a poet compel us to feel his inspiration as a living force? What events inspire a poet to write?

Poetry is the common characteristic of all poems. The two meanings in which the word poetry is used are (1) The external form or qualities of poems - *Kaviya Sarira* consisting of *alankaras* and *lakshanas* (vide Seyyuliyal *Tholkappiyam)* (2) The essential spirit of really good and genuine poetry - (vide Viswanatha, the author of *Sahitya Darpana* - Kavyam tu rasavad vakyam: The sentence which has Rasa is poetry.) The form of poetry is metre. The spirit of poetry can be known only by what it does. Poetry is intangible. The only thing it can do is to affect the mind of the reader in some way or other. There are three ways of affecting the mind. Every mind has three aspects or functions. (1) Thinking (2) Feeling (3) Willing. These are so inter-dependent and the spirit of poetry can appeal to these three fundamental aspects of the mind. It should affect all. To affect the *thinking* or intellect alone is to give knowledge or enlightenment. A mind thus affected is better stored than before. Anything affecting *feeling* does so by arousing pain or pleasure or some emotion as seen in the Kraunca incident related by Poet Valmiki. If our feelings are affected we actually feel the emotion. Knowledge is objective. It is true for everybody. Feeling is purely subjective and no one can possibly have our feelings. Feeling is one alone, isolated from everything else. This idea is worked out in Tamil poetry as "Aham" and "Puram"

*Will* is that ability in us which enables us to make decisions. This doing may be a movement of the body or some mental effort. Our will is affected if anything causes us to make the one decision and not the other. Every moment of our conscious state, we are *thinking*,

*feeling* and *willing*. If the poet *feels* pleasure or pain, he must have some knowledge of what pleases and pains. There must be external objects which rouse his feelings and the faculty that operates in this is intellect. Hence in feeling, there is knowledge. So too in an act of will. At any given concrete time, all the three faculties are at work. Thus the best type of Poetry affects the mind of the reader and appeals to these three fundamental aspects of the mind. All these faculties are at work in the author of *Tiruvacagam*, though the faculty of feeling predominates in the poem. The poet is *thinking* always on the Lord who has made him, His own, (1. 2. Sivapuranam) *feeling* happy at his nearness to him or wailing at his separation (Tiruvammanai 8: 191) from him and *willing*, that the bliss of heaven and the company of the blessed saints should be his for ever. (The Psalm of the temple 21. 384, 27. 28).

*How does Poetry affect our minds?* It affects different minds in different ways. Some do not derive any pleasure in reading poetry while others find in it the highest truth portrayed, and so love it. The theory of poetry should make explicit to us, to our intellect, the reason for our feeling. On the other hand, reading Tholkappiar's 'Seyyuliyal' (On Prosody) will never impart love for poetry. The only way to acquire a taste for it is to read genuine poetry. When we have analysed our feelings and traced them to their sources in poetry, then we can know what pleasure to expect from the new poetry that we read and can read old poetry with higher appreciation. Theory always presupposes facts. What renders possible universal theories in poetry is (1) that there would be a large amount of agreement as to what is poetically good and bad and what

particular poems are good and bad (2) that the feelings and judgments on which a theory should be based are the feelings and judgments of the best critics of poetry and there is a great common measure of agreement between them even when they disagree. So then, in what way does poetry affect the mind? We can satisfy ourselves by two considerations, namely that the main purpose of poetry is not to teach, but it is based on the abstract principle that the real aim and purpose of anything is that purpose which it alone is capable of adequately fulfilling. Prose is used when we wish to teach, and poetry does not aim directly at influencing the will, at inducing the will to make right moral decisions. The specific function of poetry is to *influence the feelings and to awaken emotion.* Pure Poetry gives us the 'rapture of pure experience without having to rely on any external judgment of truth or morality. Lascelles Abercrombie in "*The idea of Great Poetry*" says that "the first thing we require of all poetry is 'incantation' i. e., to kindle our minds into unusual vitality, exquisitely aware both of things and the connections of things." '*Tiruvacagam*' does not merely tell us what Manikkavacagar experienced; it makes his very experience itself live again in our minds. Why should we delight in his or, for that matter, in other people's experiences? All pure poetry is the communication of passionate personal experience, impregnated with an unusually personal delight. That intangible sense of sublimity we feel when we read '*Tiruvacagam*' or '*Tiruvaymoli*' or '*Paradise Lost*', is but a sense of the 'loveliness' or beauty of each moment of the life which is being communicated to us. Fullness of beauty implies intensity and it will come out of a life, which has mingled within it the varied

melodies of emotional, spiritual and intellectual contents into a grand Symphony.

*What is the nature of this specific pleasure that poetry gives?*

Pleasure does not depend on subject matter. What sort of matter does poetry require? Beauty? Emotion? Ethical values? Each perhaps forms one of the many factors. Sanskrit poetry aimed at promoting one or more of the fourfold purusharthas - Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Tirukural sought to please by its ethical values. 'Ahananooru' - gave the phases of romantic love, while the significance of the Dance of Civa and its purpose, form a prolific subject-matter for Indian Poetry. Thus there is no such thing as a poetical subject. There is almost nothing in the whole realm of human experience which has not at one time or another been treated in a poetic way, in a way which excites true poetic pleasure. The pleasure arises from the manner in which it is treated, the way in which it comes to us. The specific poetic pleasure arises from the heightening, elevating, enriching, beautifying of the subject matter. This is exactly what we experience when we read Manikkavacagar's '*Tiruvacagam*' or '*Tiruvaymoli*' of Namalvar. The *poetic view* dignifies, vivifies and illuminates the object of its contemplation. A child calls on her father in endearing loving words, but contrast these calls with that of Manikkavacagar's call on his heavenly father. Tirucadagam 10 8. 'My father, Honey Sweet, Gracious protector and my Treasure' (*அப்பனே, எனக் கமுதனே....துப்பனே.... எய்ப்பில் வைப்பனே.*) Here these simple words get charged with infinite possiblities and are of the utmost

significance. The best poetry therefore is that which dignifies the object to the highest elevation.

*How is the spirit of poetry revealed?* The spirit of poetry is revealed in that handling of the subject-matter of the poem, which idealises and elevates the subject, reveals new aspects of it and deepens its meaning. The effect of such handling is to arouse a feeling of pleasure or to excite some emotion in the reader and the arousing of this feeling in sensitive and well-balanced minds is the only test of whether the subject matter has been handled in a poetic manner. The spirit of poetry is something intangible and we can only feel it by having our emotions roused. Poetry of the highest type can offer us a refuge, or an interpretation of life or *both* as is found in *Tiruvacagam.* A poet like Manikkavacagar, Shakespeare or Goethe, can make us *feel* sorrow and in the end reconcile us to the pain, but we have to feel the stab of it first. Each of these poets lived and believed in his idea.

The great idea of the soul of man turning towards the light of God, the idea conveyed in the consecration of Manikkavacagar under the Kuruntha Tree, by the God-Guru, at Tirupperunthurai, became the poet's consciousness, so that by means of it he organised the confused facts of his life, seen without and within, into the harmony of experience and expressed it in *Tiruvacagam.* A great modern poet and critic says, "on the unity of inspiration hangs the whole theory of Poetic Art".[1]

The approach to *Tiruvacagam* can only be made through the door way of the feelings of the Poet, and

1. Vide Lascelles Abercrombie's "Idea of Great Poetry"

this path unfolds the designed and focussed shapeliness of the whole poem, from *Sivapuranam* to *Accho Padigam*. We have tried to get an insight into the progressive realisation of the poet and follow the arrangement and order of his compositions by interpreting it as "the complexity of his rich experiences turned into a single flame of consciouness"[1] of bliss, asserting its luminosity over all the powers of the world. We have tried to understand the heart of the poet who has given a strange mixture of his afflictions as well as his delights on the wingless music of feeling; and appreciate his experiences in the order in which they are expressed in the poem, as the instantaneous harmony of the fullest emotional realisation.

This leads us to consider the place cf "*Meyppadu*" or emotional realisation in Tiruvacagam. A thorough understanding of the "rasas" is essential to interpret the pure poetry of Tiruvacagam.

What is called "*rasa*" in Sanskrit is an experience of bliss unconditioned by any name, a certain blissful state of one's mind which is a quality *(guna)* of the mind. Mammata defines '*rasas*' in *Kavya Prakasa* thus:[2] "what are known in ordinary language as (a) causes, (b) effects and (c) auxiliaries of the latent emotion of love and the like, come to be spoken of as (a) excitants (b) ensuants (c) variants when found in poetry. When the latent emotion comes to be manifested by these, it is known as '*Rasa*". Bharata considered as *raṣas* those emotions which were masters *(Svami bhutas)* and were attended

1. Vide Abercrombie.
2. Kavya Prakasa of Mammata translated by Ganga Nath Jha; Page 47 Vide 'Poetry and Life by Carrod'.

upon by minor ones called *Bhavas*. The eight *rasas* are: joy, mirth, sorrow, resentment, heroism, fear, loathing and wonder. The same theory is followed by Tolkappiar, an ancient, yet outstanding authority on the subject of Tamil poetry, in the section "*Meypattial*," of *Tolkappiam*. The Tamil grammarian mentions mirth (நகை), pathos (அழுகை), loathing (இளிவரல்), wonder (மருட்கை), fear (அச்சம்), heroism (பெருமிதம்), anger (வெகுளி), and joy (உவகை) [1]

Thus *rasa* is the aesthetic perception and enjoyment of the beautiful. In India the aesthetic concepts of *ananda* and *rasa* are elevated to the spiritual plane. The Taittiotya Upanishad says (11.7)

"Raso vaisah; Rasam hyevayam labdhava anandi bhavati."

("He is *Rasa*, having obtained Him, the soul becomes full of bliss.")

The Great Indian poets found greater satisfaction in the expression of the majesty, beauty and love of God than in the expression of natural beauty or human beauty, in that it "fulfils even better the real function of art as an ever-new revealer of ever-new loveliness and an ever-generous giver of delight and a dispeller of grief."*

*Rasa* becomes the soul of poetry. *Sthayi bhavas* are the permanent instinctive impressions of the different emotions. These permanent emotional moods are called forth by certain causes, effects and accessory feelings called *vibhavas*, *anubhavas* and *vyabhicaribhavas*.

1. It is generally believed that Bharata's and Tolkappiar's synthesis of the '**Rasa**' can be traced to a common source, for so close is their similarity.

* Vide ***Indian Aesthetics*** by K. S. Ramaswamy Sastri.

The last is evanescent and comes and goes like langour, doubt, melancholy, etc. All these feelings help to intensify the permanent emotional state of love, grief, heroism etc. Each emotion arising from its *sthayi bhava*, affects the reader to such a degree that he is attended to what is represented. In "The Temple Lyric" for example (கோயிற்றிருப்பதிகம்) Manikkavacagar works out, step by step, the causes, effects and accessory feelings necessary to intensify the permanent emotional state of bliss, that he depicts in the last stanza 397. In the first stanza, he makes the appealing call to the Lord:

'Give me grace to see Thee as Thou art.'

Next he dwells on the majestic splendour of his love for the Lord.

'Oh Bliss that transcends endless powers, my love'† (388). Then the poet proceeds to trace the accessory feelings clustering round the central experience of his life.

*என்பரம் அல்லா இன்னருள் தந்தாய்*
*யானிதற் கிலனோர் கைம்மாறு.* (389)

'Sweet grace Thou bestowed'st on me, beyond my being's strength. For which I have no return to make'. Manikkavacagar's feelings reach a climax in the famous stanza 394 "*இன்றெனக் கருளி இருள்கடிந் துள்ளத்து.*" And in the last stanza 397 the truth of Advaita reveals itself to us in a sort of blissful consciousness.

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† *ஈறிலாப் பதங்கள் யாவையுங் கடந்த*
*இன்பமே! என்னுடை அன்பே!* (388)

My Love, Thou bliss transcending all delights!

"தந்ததுன் றன்னைக் கொண்டதென் றன்னைச
சங்கரா யார்கொலோ சதுரர்."

Thou gavest thyself to me: And Thou didst take me! O Sankara, who has gained more?' The poet employs the radiant persuations of sound and sense, and '*Sabda* and *artha*' are marshalled into harmony which produces in the reader's mind the poet's joyous experience of union with his Beloved Lord. This bliss is *Rasa* wherein the skill of the poet consists in rousing just that kind of feeling similar to the complex of feeling, he possessed.

Many great literary critics have asked the question whether '*Bhakti*' is an additional rasa. In Rupa Gosvami's Ujjvala, Nilamani, Madhurya rasa, the highest form of Bhakti, is described as the supreme *Rasa (Ujjvala Rasa)* and he describes 'Krishna Rati' as the *Sthayi bhava.*' The old *Sringara* becomes the chief Bhakti rasa - rati for their God, also called Madhurya. Along with these are *Santa, Dasya, Sakhya* and *Vatsalya* which five are called the chief Bhakti rasas. In *Tiruvacagam*, we find illustrations of all these forms of Bhakti rasa. To Manikkavacagar, the *alambana vibhava* is Siva: "செல்வமே சிவபெருமானே." *(544)*

"My wealth, Lord Siva." The Rasa realised in ecstatic bliss.

"இன்பமே உன்னைச் சிக்கெனப் பிடித்தேன்."
'My Rapturous Bliss - I have seized Thee fast.'

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Vide ***Poetry and Rasa*** by A. Sankaran. ***Definition of Poetry or Kavya*** by D. T. Tatacarya Siromani M. O. L. Vol. III, Journal of Oriental Research, Madras. ***The Number of Rasas*** and ***Rasa Synthesis*** by V. Raghavan, Vol. XI. J. O. R. M.

Bhakti rasa is the real *rasa*, since it is not tainted with sorrow. Madhusudana says in *Bhakti Rasayana:* "All bliss is of the form of *Brahmananda* and *Alambana.*" Abinavabharati considered *Santa*, the greatest rasa because of its relation to the last *purushartha - Moksha.* The bliss of this rasa is of the 'heaven heavenly'. shorn of earthly taints and hence is of the form of *Santa.*

The quality of sweetness which melts the heart to its core is found in *Karuna* and this rasa is present to the largest extent in *Tiruvacagam.* The Indian mind linked the beauty of feelings of Grace and Pathos to life and soul. When Valmiki went to collect twigs for the sacrificial fire, he saw a pair of Kraunca birds, perched on the branch of a tree, singing happily. Suddenly he heard a sound and the male bird fell down, shot by a hunter. The poet saw the bird breathing its last, wallowing in a pool of blood, while the bereaved bird from the branch, sent forth an agonising shriek that pierced the heart of the poet with deep pity. He gave expression to this grief in the first stanza in Sanskrit *Manisada.* That which came out of him was poetry - spontaneous expression of an intense feeling of pathos - and this incident gave rise to the production of Valmiki's *Ramayana.* So also *Thiruvcagam* was born of the plaintive strains of Karuna - "வினையேன் அழுதால் உன்னைப் பெறலாமே." "If I,the evil one, weep will I not attain Thee?" We realise this rasa (அழுகை) throughout the poem.[1]

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1 " மறுத்தனன் யானுன் னருளறியாமையி லென்மணியே
வெறுத்தெனை நீவிட்டிடுதி கண்டாய் வினையின்றொகுதி
பொறுத்தெனை யாண்டுகொள் உத்தரகோச மங்கைக்கரசே
பொறுப்பரன்றே பெரியோர் சிறுநாய்கள்தம் பொய்யினையே"

It comprises of pathos, loneliness and frustration. The sense of separation from the Lord and gratitude for His boundless mercy fill the heart of the poet with melting love -

ஊனினை யுருக்கி உள்ளொளி பெருக்கி (544)

and finally ineffable bliss floods his soul. The rasa of surprise *(Athisaya)* and that of the miraculous wonder *(Atputha)* find an indispensable place in the poem. That wonderous enjoyment, in which, we are consciously aware of the element of surprise, is '*Athisaya*' (அதிசயம்) and that super - abundant feeling in which we do not know, what we experience or how we experience is termed '*Atputha*' (அற்புதம்). It is in the light of this interpretation that Manikkavacagar has given us the Ode to Surprise (அதிசயப்பத்து) and the Miracle Ode (அற்புதப்பத்து).

In the (அதிசயப்பத்து) *Athisaya* Ode, he describes the conscious experience of the wonderous bliss of enjoyment in the company of the saints of God.[1]

In the (அற்புதப்பத்து) *Miracle* Ode, is described the unutterable personal experience of divine grace which cannot be analysed by the poet and so he says " அற்புதம் விளம்பேனே ". " I utter not Thy wondrous miracle " (41).

Thus this element of wonder, known and unknown, aids the poet in the contemplation of the strangeness, greatness and the matchless nature of his experience in the Lord.

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1 Cf Siva Gnana Bodham, Sutra XII.
vide 'ஸ்ரீ மாணிக்க வாசகர் அல்லது தீத்தார் பெருமை'.

In the Ode to Fear *(அச்சப்பத்து)*, we get the 'rasa' of fear. The poet illustrates the dread and fear he would suffer at the sight of all things, "unholy". "அம்ம நாம் அஞ்சுமாறே". In the (திருவுந்தியார்) Thiruvunthiyar Ode, is expressed the rasa of heroism *(Vira)* and anger and the poem celebrates the sacred victories of the Lord over the forces of evil.

An analysis of the element of 'rasa' in poetry leads us to consider the *form* of Tamil Poetry. The bliss of 'Bhakti rasa' for instance is evoked and manifested in Tiruvacagam not only by the beauty of the sound of the language. There is a vital difference between the expressed sense and figurative sense of words used in poetry.

Words of the Tamil vocabulary become allies in the creation of poetic delight. Tholkappiar describes the nature of the various sounds *(Osai)* and the various elements of poetical composition, in his section on Prosody, a study of which is essential to the proper understanding of *Tiruvacagam.*

*Tiruthasangam* (திருத்தசாங்கம்) is an example of "Seppal Osai", - the sound that expresses ideas most naturally. '*Ahaval Osai*' is a popular mode of expressing one's innermost thoughts by direct appeal and is employed by Manikkavacagar in கீர்த்தித் திருவகவல், போற்றித் திருவகவல் (ll 172-177) etc. The peculiar cadence of the *Osai* is felt in the following lines:

சொற்பதங் கடந்த தொல்லோன் காண்க
சித்தமுஞ் செல்லாச் சேட்சியன் காண்க
பத்தி வலையிற் படுவோன் காண்க (III, 40-42)

That sound that gathers force, panting and bubbling like the mountain stream, or leaping to and fro like the young deer, is known as '*Kali Osai*'. This *Osai* is used in some of the poems by the author of *Tiruvacagam.* His feelings usually surge like the breakers, when he argues with his soul or when he supplicates or complains before the Lord.[1] He has brought out the subtler expressiveness of this particular "*Tullal Osai*" in many of his odes where rhythm is the alternation of variations in a sound or succession of sounds,

"நானேயோ தவஞ்செய்தேன் சிவாயநம எனப்பெற்றேன்
தேனா யின்னமுதமாய்த் தித்திக்குஞ் சிவபெருமான்
தானேவந் தெனதுள்ளம் புகுந்தடியேற் கருள்செய்தான்
ஊனாரும் உயிர்வாழ்க்கை ஒறுத்தன்றே வெறுத்திடவே."

By the stress, quantity and pitch, the poem repeats a definite form of accentual rhythm and we get the feeling of buoyant, constant movement. The sound of words is effective both by contributing to that continuous organisation of sound which we call rhythm, so perfectly worked out in *Venba* Poetry as seen in திருவெண்பா (47) and by the individual quality of their vowels short or long, and consonants hard or palatal or labial, which we call syllabic sounds. *Euphony thus becomes the basis of all Tamil Poetry.*

In *Tiruvacagam,* we find all the *Lakshnas* of the best and highest types of Tamil Poetry, as formulated by Tolkappiar in '*Seyyuliyal*' - Sutra I. "*Nokku*"[2] that

1. Navaneetha Krishna Bharatiar's version: "கவி யின்பம்

2. **Nokku** is interpreted by different critics in different ways. Dr. A. C. Chettiar in "Advanced studies in Tamil Prosody" refers to it as "grace". Prof. K. Subramanya Pillai gave it the term "Creative, Poetic, and Imaginative Experience."

faculty of the mind which creates poetry, that power of making present to the mind something which is not present to the senses, is of incalculable importance in poetry. For the enjoyment of good poetry, Tolkappiar also gives eight essential factors of poetic composition known as "*ammai*" (Poetic ideas), *Alagu* (Poetic diction), *Tonmai* (usage), *Tol* (sonority), *Virundu* (novelty), *Iyaipu* (mellifluousness), *Pulan* (clarity) and *Ilaipu* (interlinkedness)* These forms of style show the importance placed on the subtle power of poetic expression, and suggestion of words. In adopting the technique of metrical appeal to the emotions, Manikkavacagar was pre-eminent.

Aesthetic enjoyment as we have seen proceeds from an emotional rather than from an intellectual source. The appeal is to the feelings and the purpose of the figures of speech or "*Alankaras*" is to charm the mind by beautifying and enriching the word and sense. Tolkappiar deals with the major figure of speech-simile or "Uvamai" in the section on "*Uvamaviyal*". The essence of a simile is similitude and similes such as we find in *Tiruvacagam*, not only illustrate but also ennoble the subject.[1] Manikkavacagar's similes illuminate his poetic world. Objects familiar through direct experience or familiar through puranic or literary sources figure in Tiruvacagam's similes and such allusions add to the charm of his poetry. An allusion is like a spring which when touched, releases in the mind of a well-read reader a whole train of associations and ideas.[2] The opening stanza of "The Poet's Prayer"

* Interpretation approved by Prof. K. Subramania Pillai

1. Vide Section E: திருவெம்பாவை Stanza 167
2. „ „ G: பிடித்த பத்து . „ 544

(*நீத்தல் விண்ணப்பம்*) relies entirely for its emotional effect on the use of the words: *"கடையவனே...; விடையவனே....; உடையவனே....; சடையவனே..." (105)*

These words call up images of Lord Siva's manifestations of Grace without any attempt to describe. Thus the language of the poet gives us a rich harmony of experience which is thought, sensation and feeling all at once.

Any analysis of Indin poetry is incomplete without a consideration of the relationship of music with the aesthetic, emotional and religious ideas of the people. Ilanko Adigal in his immortal "*Silappadikaram*" has shown the intimate connection of poetry with music and spirituality and we find the Alvars and the Tevaram saints steeped in melodies. The music of the *Yal* was their supreme model for poetry. What Sri Suka said about Narada and his veena can be applied to Manikkavacagar and his Tiruvacagam which is crystallised music.

"This divine sage is indeed a happy man full of inner affluence as he sings the glory of the Lord and singing gets mad with the love of the Lord and then fills with the ecstasy of the music of his strings, the weary and joyless world." The innate loveliness of the poet's message about Infinity can best be experienced, when the lyrics are rendered in musical forms. The forms ascribed to the *ragas* and *raginis* are mostly based upon the sentiments which are expressed by the names of those melodies.[1] The allocation of the different hours of the day and of the seasons to the singing of the different *ragas* seems to be primarily based upon the emotional

1. ***The Meaning of the Ragas*** by N. S. Ramachandran.

significance of the particular *ragas*. The *raga* "*Bhupala*" produces for instance a very pathetic effect, if it is sung before sunrise. The morning song - *Tiru Empavai* sung in *Bhupala Raga* gives a very echo to the seat where Love is throned. Aesthetic joy expresses the essence of music in *Tiruvacagam* and the crescendo and diminuendo of sounds weave the spell of harmony divine, that made a lover of *Tiruvacagam* utter: "He who is not moved to soulful bliss by *Tiruvacagam* will not be moved by anything else." The essence of poetry and music mingle in many an ode in *Tiruvacagam*, as in (திருப்பொற் சுண்ணம்) - '*Tirupporsunnam*' which follows the style of Greek poetry, where the chorus usually resorts to music. We get the music of language, answering to the music of the mind in (திருப்படையாட்சி) or the 'Song of Victory' untying as it were the secret soul of harmony.

Thus the poem is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and like all great poems, it represents something like the whole gamut of man's experience which becomes in our minds, a single infinitely rich chord of harmony.

In *Tiruvacagam*, the poet speaks to us in an unique expression of his unique experience of God realisation and he said what he meant but his meaning seems to beckon away beyond itself or rather to expand into something boundless, the glory of Eternity - which is only focussed in it - something which we feel would satisfy the *whole* of us; about the best poetry, there floats an atmosphere of infinite suggestion.

We have thus sought to interpret Pure poetry, with which theory of poetry, we shall approach *Tiruvacagam* in holy reverence.

Those who are susceptible to the effect of poetry will feel in this immortal poem full of that round of perfection and felicity of loveliness, the sobs and songs of the finite man, at first murmuring in sweet and aching undertones, and then mingling with the rapturous ecstasy of Infinity.

This all-embracing perfection that we find and enjoy in *Tiruvacagam* cannot be defined in poetic words, nor in prose. Sivaprakasa Swamigal expressed its elusive charm when he said:

‘... ... ... ... *வாதவூ ரன்ப*
*பாவெனப் படுவதுன் பாட்டு.*’

“The quintessence of poetry is seen in your poem.”

Thus Manikkavacagar’s poetry awakens in us a spiritual insight, an elevation of the mind which is at once an act of worship. His is not only the grand style in poetry but his is the grand style in Life.

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## B

## ESSENCE OF POETRY IN TIRUVACAGAM.

*Title:-* The title of the poem has been interpreted in various ways: “Divine Utterance”, “Beauteous words”, and “Holy strains”. “*Tiru*” is an epithet which signifies “Beauty” such as Keats understood the principle of Beauty to be when he said:- “Truth is Beauty and Beauty is Truth.” It also connotes “release,” or “light of grace” - a poem of exaltation of the bliss of release or poetic gems emitting rays of Grace. ‘*Tiru*’ is equivalent to sublime, sacred, Holy

or Glorious. A poem that deals with Eternity. To this class of poetry belong Dante's "*Divine Comedy*" "*Tiruvaimoli*" and "*Tiru Arulpa*" (திரு அருள்மொழி). Tiruvacagam is a poem consisting of the noblest and sublimest expression of human love to God[1] a wonderful poetic exposition of the great truth enunciated by Tirumular that "Love is God."

The poem consists of fifty one lyrics including four *Ahavals* - invocations or Garlands of Praise to the Lord, and forty seven other cantos, some of which are odes containing ten stanzas known as *Padigams*. Each stanza in the *Padigam* forms a unit of its own, as well as a link in interpreting the meaning of the whole canto. Each canto in turn is a unit of experience, characterised by intensity and richness and knit into organic unity, evoking a grand symphony of emotional realisation.

The order of the poems in *Tiruvacagam* eludes analysis, on the basis of conception, structure or on the unity of time and place. Thillai Odes follow the lyrics composed at Tirupperunthurai, while incidents relating to the earlier period of the poet's dedicated life figure in the later sections of the poem. The criticism that Tiruvacagam as it stands, does not signify any purposeful arrangement, seems to be a grave injustice to the poet. After a careful study of the whole poem and in the light of comparative study with other great mystic poems of the world, the conclusion is irresistible that Manikkavacagar (he whose utterances are rubies)

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1. .........மொழிந்த வாசகமே
வாசகம் அதற்கு வாக்கியம்
தூசக லல்குல்வேய்த் தோளிடத்தவனே.

(சிவப்பிரகாச சுவாமிகள்)

adopted a technique which conforms to the form of Great poetry, as interpreted in the first section of this thesis.

It is true that while visiting holy shrines or when burdened with the sufferings, inevitable to a seeker of truth, the poet may have found an immediate impulse to sing; he may have thus expressed spontaneously his inspired realisations. This is the common method followed by almost all the poetic bards who wrote the *Thevaram* and the *Prabantham* lyrics. But Manikkavacagar did not stop there; he went a step higher. The perfect artist that he was, he wove and inter-related the parts into a whole and gave it the unity of inspiration. In the quiet sanctuary at Thillai, he focussed the shapeliness of the whole poem, proving the truth of Wordsworth's definition of poetry as "Emotion recollected in tranquillity." Our approach to the study of *Tiruvacagam* is based on the conviction, that in its present order and arrangement, wherein he followed the rhythm of his poetic emotion, the poem was finally delivered by the poet to Sri Nataraja.

Few feats of the human mind have equalled that of Manikkavacagar's expression of a complete faith and of transporting such a faith into art. His poetry, we find, blossomed before the sacred feet of the Lord of Thillai; and how can any critic say that this final presentation of *Tiruvacagam* lacks harmony? From the *Sivapuranam* to the last Ode *Accho padigam*, there flows unbroken, the rhythm of the poetic emotion. Hark to the opening music of "*Namacivaya.*" It echoes throughout the poem and carries with it the idea of a

* Sivapuranam 1. 93. '*சொல்லிய பாட்டின் பொருளுணர்ந்து சொல்லுவார்.*'

Supreme Mover of the world and the picture of the poet in bondage. Here begins the wondrous tale of the Pilgrim of Eternity [1] who journeys from bondage to the freedom of Sivanagar, [2] from the state of calling upon the Lord as "Namacivaya" to the blissful stage of addressing Him as "Sivayanama." This 'Rasa' of fulfilment, this incantation evoked by a reading of the poem as a whole, is the reward of an appreciative study of Tiruvacagam.

Let us analyse the poetic relationship of the first two lyrics in Tiruvacagam. "Sivapuranam" was supposed to have been sung by the poet after being enlightened by the God-Guru, at Tirupperunthurai, and it deals mainly with the transcendent nature of the Lord. Long afterwards, at Thillai, filled with profound gratitude, he sings on the manifestations of the Lord's Grace in the second lyric on "Sivan's Glory" (கீர்த்தித் திருவகவல்.) The first poem is the morning hymn of praise, breathing hope and love. The 'Ahaval on Sivan's Glory' is the evening hymn of praise infusing calm beauty. In Sivapuranam, the sun of glory has just risen in the poet's mental orbit and in Kirthi Tiru Ahaval, the poet is nearer the goal of union with the sun of glory. Thus we see, the poet's emotional experience leads him to hail the Lord, on his first initiation at *Tirupperunthurai* and this is fittingly followed by the nature glorification of the Lord at Thillai; the praise of Siva's *transcendental* nature is followed by His glorious, *gracious* nature. Thus is built up the harmony which makes the poet's communication, a perfect work of art. That we may enjoy Tiruvacagam, we too must

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1. ***Prometheus Bound***
2. Milton's '***Paradise lost***' and '***Paradise Regained***' conceptions. திருவேசறவு.

be emotionally responsive to this technique, through which the attitudes and feelings of the poet's experience are evoked.

In every canto in Tiruvacagam, we find moving references to the greatest and grandest experiences of the poet's life. "When the Lord made him, his very own."[1] This crucial incident gains a halo of poetic sanctity by the constant repetition in each section, for, by this fruit of Grace which the Lord gave him under the Kuruntha tree[1] was born the poem of sweetest utterance. He never forgets for a moment, his *first* meeting with the God-Guru, nor His precious gift of Grace to him. When he sings the praises of his Lord or when he looks fearfully at the illusions of the world, or when he realises within himself the destiny of his soul, as he often does within the inner eye of wisdom, the emotional significance of the first meeting with the God-Guru and his enlightenment, stands revealed prominently. This is the source - this Mount of Grace - from which his stream of poesy rises and flows, steadily gathering force, as it nears the ocean of Bliss. The essence, the unity of Tiruvacagam's unadulterated poesy, consists in nothing except poetic emotion, flowing from this height of the poet's vital experience - the conversion under the Kurunatha tree.

That Manikkavacagar was a cultured man who entered fully into the heritage of his land, is clear from his poems. Content, style, diction and mastery of metres all show the accomplished poet. He knew how to find poetry in local customs and homely stories.

1. Sivapuranpm: 1. 74. சார்த்தென்னை யாட்கொண்ட எந்தை பெருமானே.

Over all his experiences, he threw the glamour of his poetic genius. By virtue of the enchantment of language, the poet's personal mastery of an infinite wealth has become our possession too. We shall now give a few examples to show how words have a soul as well as a *sense* in Tiruvacagam. Striking phrases stir the depths: '*உயிருண்கிற எம்மானே*' (*601*) 'My Lord who consumes the soul.' '*பரமானந்தப் பழங்கடல்*' (*3, 66*) 'The ancient sea of felicity infinite'. '*வாக்குன் மணிவார்த்தைக் காக்கி*' 'My speech is dedicated to utter Thy Gem-like word.'

The sound of words is effective and in the last three stanzas of (*நீத்தல் விண்ணப்பம்*) "Leave me not" Lyric, where the poet adopts the "Ninthasthuthi" style of addressing the Lord, we have fine examples of the subtler expressiveness of the mere sound of words.

*சிரிப்பிப்பன் சீறும் பிழைப்பை...........*
*விரிப்பிப்பன் என்னை*
*உரிப்பிச்சன் தோலுடைப்பிச்சன் நஞ்சூண்பிச்சன்*
*ஊர்ச்சுடுகாட்*
*டெரிப்பிச்சன் என்னையும் ஆளுடைப் பிச்சனென்*
*றேசுவனே.*

The surging chaos of the unexpressed suffuses and colours everything which flashes and struggles into existence. The skill of the poet is to make out of language and the effects of language, a reliable symbol of his experience.

*ஆள்வாரிலி மாடாவேனோ*
*நெருங்கும் அடியார்களும் நீயும்*
*நின்று நிலவி விளையாடும்*
*மருங்கே சார்ந்துவர எங்கள்*
*வாழ்வே வாவென்றருளாயே* (*384*)

'A stray cow without the sheltering care of the cowherd: the majestic sight of the Lord and His favoured saints rambling in sportive glee'. When the

symbol is understood, we realise the forlornness, nay, the pathetic helplessness of the poet on one side and the happy picture of the bliss of the saints of God. The original experience of the poet corresponds to our understanding of the simile and imagery.

*இரைதேர் கொக்கொத் திரவுபகல்*
*ஏசற் றிருந்தே ஏசற்றேன்*
*கரைசேர் அடியார் களிசிறப்பக்*
*காட்சி கொடுத்துன் னடியேன்பால்*
*பிரைசேர் பாலின் நெய்போலப்*
*பேசா திருந்தால் ஏசாரோ* (382)

The heron waits on the bank patiently and sadly, day and night, for its prey and grows weary in its watch. So awaits the poet, day and night, before His Lord, for the chance bequest of grace and his weariness and futility are only accentuated at the contrasting happiness of the holy ones of God reaching the shore of bliss on the other side. The Lord does not reveal Himself to him even as the ghee is not visibly manifest in the unchurned milk. Thus we read the poetry of emotional forces that crave for sensuous form for their expression, and in relation to each symbol, the pattern of deliverance is wrought out, the central experience of the poet communicated.

The realisation that the Lord is man's fulfilment, the poet's dependence and the overflow of joy is mediated through the imagery of a lady-love and a mother:

*காணும தொழிந்தேன் நீயினி வரினுங்*
*காணவும் நாணுவனே* (603)

Even if the great beloved comes before her (viz. the poet) she will feel abashed to see Him......The power of sight fails.

With something of the directness of intuition, we apprehend the intimations of early childhood in the following verse:

*தாயாய் முலையைத் தருவானே*
*தாரா தொழிந்தாற் சவலையாய்*
*நாயேன் கழிந்து போவேனோ*
*நம்பி யினித்தான் நல்குதியே*
*தாயே யென்றுன் தாளடைந்தேன்* *(50; 647)*

Within Manikkavacagar's poem, we are aware of the social pattern of lordship and sovereignty (Eg. திருத்தசாங்கம் and திருப்பாண்டிப் பதிகம்) helping to determine the image of God and of approach to His presence. But the range of his vision took him to other forms too, set in its utter simplicity at the point of the poem's growing ecstasy. In the stanza quoted above from (ஆனந்தமாலை) The Garland of Rapture (50), we get the image of the Lord as the Divine Mother who suckles the child with the milk of love, wisdom and joy. That child who is not fed so, becomes a weakling (சவலை). This image evokes the deeply felt memories of childhood, the wonder of the babe's first apprehension of love, joy and illumination, wrapped in the caresses of a loving mother.

In these several ways, the emotional significance of such images comes to inhere in the words used by the poet for the rhythms of his inner experiences. It is through the power of words, similes and images as poetically used to gather, hold and release again infinite subtleties of emotional meaning, that these 'rasas' are produced.

The perfection of Manikkavacagar's diction is one of the marvels of poetic art. After reading the

soulstirring odes in *Tiruvacagam*, we feel like Coleridge who wrote thus, after reading the 'Prelude' of Wordsworth:

> "Scarce conscious and yet conscious of its close,
> I state, my being blended in one thought.
> Thought was it? or aspiration? or resolve?
> Absorbed yet hanging still upon the sound -
> And when I rose, I found myself in Prayer."

In the light of this criticism, it is easy to follow the art of the poet who did not shrink from speaking of the grandeur of eternity with the tongue of fire, who sought to bring light and darkness in the same picture, who blended concord and discord, who scaled the Himalayan heights of exalted vision, from where, he looked down into the deepest chasms of humanity, filled with stench and smoke. It does not mystify us to read of his ecstatic joy in the "Ode to Thillai," in poem (31), sinking in the melancholy of the "Song of Supplication,"[2] in poem (32). Thus in the texture of Manikkavacagar's poetry, we get the recurring factors of pain or tension of discord - as the feeling of separation from his object of Love, is on the crescendo - followed by relief and delight, as the feeling of union with his Lord predominates. This corresponds to the continual interplay of opposites, glimpses of infinite bliss amidst earthly frustration and pain, gloating in the rapture of bliss in the "Lyric on Victory"(49) succeeded by the frozen chill of impatient waiting in the "Garland of Joy" (50), gazing at one time on the resplendent radiance of Reality, revelling in its illuminating joy and viewing with anguish and agonising cries on the world of unreality. It is by such subtle

1. கண்ட பத்து: 2 பிரார்த்தனைப் பத்து

transforming magic that the poet works out an ideal reconcilement of opposites, and it is the *insight* of the poet into the nature of his experience as he journeyed from '*Asat*' (the world of matter) to '*Sat*' (God), that constitutes the integral element of Manikkavacagar's poetry. This is the "open sesame" to enjoy the 'rasa' of *Tiruvacagam*, radiating the unity of aesthetic emotion, realistic imagination and truth of beauty.

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## C

## THE POETRY OF ADORATION.

### 1

*Sivapuranam:* An Invocation to Siva

*Place:* Tirupperunthurai

*Quintessence:* The Everlasting Infinitude of Siva

*Poetic Sentiment:* Relishing the joy of Adoration [1]

In Tirupperunthurai, the God-Guru [2] appeared to the poet seated under the Kuruntha tree. He taught him "Siva-Jnanam." This poem was sung in praise and gratitude of the Lord's gracious act in granting him the light of His Grace. The poem invokes the Lord who is both transcendent and immanent. Siva moves the world by his five fold acts of Creation, Preservation, Dissolution, Illusion and Grace (42-43). His Sakti or Energy not only moves the world but is the indwelling

Note:- The Edition of Tiruvacagam used for purposes of reference to lines and stanzas is திருவாசகம், மூலமும் பல ஆராய்ச்சி அகராதிகளும், சைவசித்தாந்த மகா சமாஜம் (1941)

1. சிந்தைமகிழச் சிவபுராணந் தன்னை (19)
2. நிலந்தன்மேல் வந்தருளி நீள்கழல்கள் காட்டி

Grace in the heart of man who is drawn to Him (18). Man can save himself from the effects of his "malas" by singing the Lord's praises (20). The soul of man is embedded in the world of matter. The stages of evolution are traced in lines (26-31), from the frail grass, shrub, worm, tree, beast, bird, snake and stone to man, demon, asura, sage and God. What pathos is condensed in line (எல்லாப் பிறப்பும் பிறந்திளைத்தேன் எம் பெருமான் 31) - weary with the cycle of existence in the midst of illusion's gloom, the soul takes on the human embodiment and then begins the silent work of Grace. The problem of life and death ceased to be a mystery to our poet, though it was a source of misery to him. The sleep at night is the lull given to the soul after its toil in the day; the death is a higher lull given it after the wearisome task through its life's course; there is a lull given to all souls in common at the end of the aeon when the whole universe reverts to its primordial condition. Salvation is the eternal lull given to the ripe soul by the Grace of Siva, after it has discharged its duty of piety and Godliness. It is this bliss that the poet requests of the Lord:

> *பாணனேன் படிற் றாக்கையை விட்டுனைப்*
> *பூணுமா றறியேன் புலன் போற்றியே* (5, 5, 48)

Seven times in the poem, we get references to the poet's enlightenment by Grace (vide lines 2, 18, 21, 32, 39, 69 and 74) 'மெய்யே, உன்பொன்னடிகள் கண்டின்று வீடுற்றேன்' - "Truth! This day I saw Thy 'Golden Feet' and attained Relese." The Lord permeates heaven and earth with transcendent splendour of light (1.23). God is Light (62. 78). He is also the illumination of wisdom (மெய்ஞ்ஞானமாகி மிளிர்கின்ற மெய்ச்சுடரே. 1.38). He is the soul's radiance (உள்ளத் தொளிக்கும் ஒளியானே. 68).

When man gets enlightened and becomes absorbed in the light of God's splendour (அறிவு) and the light of His Grace (அருள்), he is said to have "attained the Feet of God" (சிவனடிக் கீழ் 94)[1]. In his poem of praise the poet revels in saluting the "Feet of the Lord." (5-15). Thus He abides in the hearts of true saints and saves them from perishing. The pitiable condition of man is described in lines 51-55 - man fettered in gloom of ignorance, bound by chains of deeds, caged in the filthy body and subject to the tyranny of the five senses. In tender love, surpassing that of a mother, (61) the Lord reveals Himself (நிலந்தன்மேல் வந்தருளி நீள்கழல்கள் காட்டி. 59) and then dawns the poet's realisation (75) of two factors first, the sublime bliss of the soul when the Lord abides within it;

*இமைப்பொழுதும் என்னெஞ்சின் நீங்காதான் றாள்வாழ்க*
*நீரா யுருக்கியென் ஆருயிராய் நின்றானே* (69)

and secondly, the soul's intense longing to be freed from the prison house of mortality, which leads to the persistent, address to the Lord for 'LIBERATION' (48, 85-88). He is consistent to this realisation, in all his poems in *Tiruvacagam.*

Thus he communicates his experience of infinity in the language of humanity.

92. "Thou who art beyond human intellect.

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1. It is essential to understand the full significance of this idea, as it is one of the leading references in the poem. The poet uses several terms as திருவடி, மலரடி, சேவடி, பாதமலர், இறை தாள், பெய்கழல், தாள் தாமரை, to convey this idea of man's relationship with the Lord through Grace. Vide Siva Gnana Botham; Sutra XI அயரா அன்பின் அரன்கழல் செலுமே.

93. They seek to adore Thee, beneath Thy Holy Feet.

94. If they *know* Thee the 'incantation' of their song,

95. Truly they are blessed." (92–95)

The purport of this stanza is that the highest bliss is attainable by the attainment of the highest 'Jnana'. By 'Jnana' is meant the knowledge of the One True God.[1] The fact is that we can *know* (94) only when we can fully realise God's inmost nature, that God is Sivam, "Love is God.[2] Love is thus the fruition of knowledge.[3]

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2

*Keerti Tiru Ahaval:* A Psalm of Glory

*Place:* Thillai

*Quintessence:* An adoration of Siva's Glorious Grace

*Poetic Sentiment:* Out of the fullness of grateful love, in subdued music, the poet dwells on the Lord's manifestations of Grace in order to save man. The poet like a fully blown lotus floating restfully, sings on the Sun of Life for His benign rays of mercy. A fascinating picture of the 'Siva Gnani' inviting all passers by to halt and listen to his sweet strains so that they may follow the great path of deliverance.

The poem deals with the general scheme of the working of Grace or Sakti in the universe. The Lord

1. Sivagnana Siddhiyar: Sutra VII. Adhikarana 11. 27
2. Tirumular: அன்பே சிவமாவ தாரு மறிந்திலர்.
3. Tiruvacagam: யாருன்னை யறியகிற் பாரே.

can only be understood by man through the force of Grace; 1 – 25,26. Then follows a series of particular incidents gleaned from the religious history of Saiva Literature, to illustrate the renowned acts of Lord Siva manifested to his devotees. This section is full of rich associations from puranic episodes and mythology.. The poet exhorts true devotees to join the happy hand of "*bhaktas.*"

"The infinite Lord of Grace took unto His own,
The nature of each and everyone."

In this *ahaval* the Lord's intimate relationship with his "*bhaktas*" is seen and Grace is beheld in the form of "*Ammai-appa*" (12.25).

The popular convention of royalty in India connotes special Insignia. Having been a minister of state in one of the advanced states of S. India, the poet employs kingly convention,[1] in extolling the glory of the King of Kings - Deva - Deva (122). He had the banner of the Holy ash, the drum for his instrument, the blue lotus for his garland, the trident for his weapon, his armour being flame of light. In his kingdom of Pandya with its city of Uttara - Kosa Mangai, the river of delight (Ananda) flows from the hill of Grace.[2] His chariot is joy and he wins us by his gracious love and condescension (126). When describing

1. Vide, திருத்தசாங்கம் for the significance of each image. The only difference between the two delineations is that in the ahaval, the banner is of the Holy ash and the garland is of blue lotus whereas in "Tiru Thasangam", the banner is dharma and the garland is "arugu" grass. The former has a special significance to his consecration, while the latter connotes general application.

2. அருளுமலை போற்றி 1 – 16.

the river of delight, the poet stresses the word, "Anandamme."[1] The stressing of the consonant and elongation of the final syllable, intensifies the sense of rapture conveyed by the image of the rivers of bliss, which by its swiftness destroys all ills of humanity (105–106).

In lines 127–128, the poet alludes to the bidding of his Guru to bide his time and go to sacred Thillai - an autobiographical touch where shines the personality of the poet and the rich experience of his conversion is revealed. It is lines like these, scattered in the poem of *Tiruvacagam* that make us feel the vividness of the poet's direct visions of the Lord and the charm of a personality who conversed with the Eternal Beloved. This *ahaval* closes on an eulogy of the sanctuary of Thillai, where with beauteous smile, the Lord performed his mystic Dance. திருமுகத் தழகுறு சிறுநகை (143) is a beautiful sculptural image transformed into a poetic image. "The celestial smile of beauteous grace" - this elusive smile of Siva with his Sakti forces, has been immortalised in the shrine of Sri Nataraja at Thillai, and is the symbol of the Lord's immanence in the Universe, working in and through the "*Arul-Sakti*" or Grace, and of the veiling energy of the Lord - *Kali* - during the dissolution of the Universe.[2]

1. ஆனந்தமமே. vide: அரனேயோ 1, 85.

2. Collum on "The Dance of Siva" - "The symbolism of the dance of Siva appears to be poetic in the highest sense in which poetry is a perception of the specific significance and beauty that informs an idea or thing and transmute it into something living and vital. The Dance explains the puzzle of continuous progress and dissolution." The cosmic Dance is explained by Manikkavacagar too in the succinct phrase (143) that progress and light in one realm translated itself into disintegration and darkness in the other.

The poet works in the Aristotelian manner, from the general to the particular, the idea that God moves the world objectively and in the heart of man subjectively through grace. By the fusion of associative links, by allusions to the religious traditions and myths of the Tamil land and chiefly the Pandyan Kingdom, the poet reveals the might of *Siva-Sakti* and crowns it by expressing his own experience of tasting such divine love, and ends by his glorification of sacred Thillai, where the cosmic dance tramples dense darkness down.

Grace gives knowledge "*Jnana*" or 'Illumination' to man who is bound up with the world of matter. That outstretched arm of the Lord of Thillai symbolises the hand that holds (1. 145) the power and he showers his blessings of Grace.........Where? The answer is given in the next "*ahaval*" (3). His very showers of mercy fall on the *Universe.*

*On Whom?* The answer is given in "*Pottit Tiru Ahaval*" or "The Sacred Psalm of Praise" (4). His showers of mercy cleanse the heart of Man - the Pilgrim in search of the Great Lover.

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C

## 3. TIRUVANDAP PAGUTHI.

*Title:* The Nature of the Universe.

*Place:* Thillai.

*Quintessence:* Siva's revealed and unrevealed Nature.

*Poetic Sentiment:* Praise to the Lord and the wonder of his subtle relationship with the Universe

are explicitly brought out in this '*ahaval*'. One of the finest autobiographical expositions is given in lines 142–183. In all the poems in the *Tiruvacagam*, he is consistent with the picture he paints of himself here, as a quivering frame compounded of the tender texture of the heart, where ooze the fountain springs of '*Anbu*' and '*Ananda*'. Here is a fine sketch of a poet whose life itself was of the finest kind.

The Universe is the colossal stage which brings God and man together. The processes of Evolution, Preservation and Dissolution, bring out the supreme greatness of Siva who stands above his operations and at the same time he pervades the minutest atoms in the world. (இன்னுழை கதிரின் துன்னணுப் புரையச் சிறிய வாகப் பெரியோன். 5) The myriads of planets and countless lives therein, swinging on the "*Tattuvas*" or categories of the *Siddhantin*, resolve at his supreme will, like the floating specks seen through the ray of the light, as it streaks through the narrow crevice of the house. The poem deals with the operations of the Lord on this theatre. He gives to each, its moving force (13–18) light to the sun, coolness to the moon and heat to fire etc. In every object in the world, he pervades as fragrance in flower, or symphony in music etc. The Lord of the Universe is the poetry of Existence and can only be understood through the objects of his creation.

Manikkavacagar describes his vision in memorable lines: (கண்ணால் யானுங் கண்டேன் காண்க 58) I saw Him - Yes I saw my Fount of Grace. At the touch of felicity my happiness knew no bounds. 'சிவனென யானுந் தேறினன்

The crowning experience of the poet is the gem of this poem and it is set forth in a beautiful allegory under the image of the cloud - the grace of the manifested Lord is praised allegorically[1].

In India, the rain-bearing cloud is the harbinger of happiness to man. From the infinite sea of felicity, the cumulus cloud arises - (The Lord of Mercy) and in lightning flashes, displays on the Heavens, when with affright, the serpents (powers of the senses) lie dazed and the intense heat (of sorrow) receedes before it. Thunder ushers the monsoon rain (of mercy) and behold nature then. The 'Gloriosa Superba' stretches out its slender form dripping drops of sweet honey (Grace) and this is like the devotees who are in the act of homage. A minute ago, the herd of deer (the band of men in pursuit of Truth) sought to quench their thirst and alas, was deluded by the mirage (of false religious beliefs) and haste hither and thither, when descends the heavy showers (of mercy) rushing gleefully o'er the barriers (of births) uprooting huge trees (of "*Aram - Pavam*" or two-fold deeds of good and ill) and fills the mountain lakes (the hearts of saints) on whose banks blossom flowers and where the hum of bees is heard (Harmony of Peace & Patience). The appeal of this allegory lies in its simplicity and serenity and in the contrast between the surging of the tumultous rains and the quiet beauty of the lake-side. The poet wishes to convey that the energising force of .'*Sakti*' once entering the heart of saints, breathes tranquillity.

Before the lake (93) stretches the field (of worship) where the homely ploughmen (labourers in the service of God) sure of their waters (of Grace) sow the grains

1. 3. 66–95

(of Love). The poet leaves it to our imagination to take in the suggestion of the rich harvest and the feast (of arul-amirtham, bliss of fulfilment) enjoyed by these labourers. The allegory is not burdened with obscurity but like the swift onset of the monsoon cloud, the poet unfolds the beauty, of the special grace showered on him by the Lord. "God the ocean of Grace transformed Himself into a cloud and rained torrents on the hill of Tirupperunthurai to the delight of the thirsty mortals."[1]

The poet describes the Supreme One as eluding all knowledge (lines 124–140) and the repetition of the word - (ஒளித்தும்) veiling - conveys the indescribability and the inconceivability of His nature. Yet there is the sure and easy means of love to reach Him. Herein the true relation of God with the Universe, as the spirit permeating through them, God's special condescension for the sake of the poet and the joyous bliss conferred upon him by the Lord, are stamped with deep pathos. Listen to the poet, who has become a child playing hide and seek with God. "The hiding player - There I have seen you" (ஒளிக்குஞ் சோரனைக் கண்டனம். 141). What follows the discovery? We hear the child's peals of laughter, wild gestures and tears of joy. From line (141), to the end of the poem (183) the poet's emotions leap to a boundless joy and his ecstasy bodies forth in rapturous poetry. The language, the words, nay even the metre, break on the precipitous rocks of spiritual ecstasy and poetic emotion.

142. Haste, oh haste with the garland.
Bind His Feet:

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1. Siddhanta Deepika: 1920. Article by Tirumalai Kolundu Pillai on "St. Manikkavasakar's Poems" Page 113.

Encircle, Gather round, follow and leave not.
Clasp Him, tho' He eludes -
The incomparable One trumpeted His coming
Made me His Own -
A Sage, He came and showed Himself to me.

150. Love undying, dissolved my bones and gushed out
Like the roaring of the tempestuous waves
That rise so high and eddy away.
In utter bewilderment, I rolled,
Reeled like a madman, a drunkard[1];
The world was puzzled; amazed at my frenzy
Which surpassed that of a wild elephant.
Then as if it were to counteract my melting state

157. He injected the toxin of honey
In a string of negative terms, "தெரியேன், அறியேன், தரியேன், செத்தேன்", he portrays his sinking in spiritual ecstasy.

166. I cannot evaluate Thy grace to me -
Tasting it, I am not full; 'பருகியு மாரேன்'
Quaffing, it chokes me. 'விழுங்கியும் ஒல்ல இல்லேன்'

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1. Shelly: I fall upon the thorns of life,
I faint, I bleed."

Keats: " Why did I laugh tonight?" - These poets had not found out the solution to the burthen, the mystery of life, and hence they were all ineffectual angels beating their wings in the luminous void. Here we see our poet, with the keys of Heaven, opening the Doors of bliss and his poetry exults in the glory of revelation. To the world he appeared a madman; for Shakespeare said, "The lunatic, the lover and the poet are of Imagination all compact."

While the poet was struggling for the power of assimilation to enjoy the sweet food of Divine Grace, he is reminded of the expansive ocean, that absorbs easily all that enters it. Such association of ideas and feelings with poetic imagery, reveal the masterly technique of Manikkavacagar's flawless poetic art.

168. On full moon nights, the billows heave
Tossing up high tides - so too my heart
Bubbles with the Felicity of His Grace. It enters

170. The sinews and pores of my bones, the interstices of my hair cells.

174. Such wondrous ambrosia brims from my filthy body,
Oozing through the parts, so as to make me
Melt with ecstatic delight: my whole mortal frame
176. From head to feet has become one heart!

180. Mercy's distilled sweetness mingled in me,
And He fed me with the nectar of Grace!
He, who is not known even by the Gods, *Brahma* or *Vishnu*.

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D

## 4. THE GARLAND OF PRAISE.[1]

(போற்றித் திருவகவல்)

*Place:* Thillai

*Quintessence:* The Progress of the Soul of Man.

*Poetic Sentiment:* Praise to the Lord for graciously guiding the soul through the fears and uncertainties of

1. Sir P. Arunachalam styled it "The pilgrim's Progress".

life. A Pilgrim's Progress from the womb through the world, to the Lord.

In 'Thiruvandappaguthi' 3. 26-31.[1], we get a fine sketch of the evolution of natural sentient beings. In this poem, the process of human embodiments in the womb and its progress in the world are worked out, in great detail. The poet traces the journey of the soul through countless incarnations (11); the undercurrent of the Lord's guidance in its developments is brought out by the forcible and recurring use of the word, "பிழைத்தும்" - in the sense of "perils escaped". The descent into the human womb, the various impediments to its growth therein, the danger it has to tide through in its infancy, its escape from the havoc of maidens' alluring glances, its combats with prosperity and adversity, its escape from the dangers of false learning'[2] - these are deliveated in picturesque poetry. Each danger is given suitable metaphorical import, as in "from the sea of erudition, its perils escaping, from the distressing effect of wealth escaping, from the age-old stings of poverty, escaping". 38-40.

Besides these perils that attend a man in the objective world, the poet traces another powerful idea in line 42. 'The awakening thought of the Lord' - (தெய்வ மென்பதோர் சித்த முண்டாகி) with all the conflicts of a life of piety. The soul has to stem through fresh difficulties. The poet must have interested himself in the various schools of philosophy such as Atheism, Idealism and Materialism - each preaching its

1. 3.26-31 புல்லாகிப் பூடாய்.......எல்லாப் பிறப்பும் பிறந் திளைத்தேன்.

2. Vide: Siddanta Deepika Vol. V. No. 8. page 113.

conflicting doctrines to the confusion of the true seekers after infinite bliss.[1] Each sect claims the superiority of its doctrines, the brahmins claim importance to their rites and fastings (50) while others place the "*Bhakti Marga*" as the true way to bliss. The idealist believes the world to be a mirage and sets the soul on a par with God. The materialist trumpets the doctrine of Epicureanism. Through all these tortuous paths the poet waded, till the God-Guru condescended to appear in human form (59) to confer on him everlasting bliss.

The effect of this experience, *the illumination by the God-Guru*, is described in touching, heart-melting strain. "Gnana-Love", (அறிமால் 71) was the armour which he donned to reach the feet of God. The state of the poet is very similar to that of the lover's pangs - the lover is in search of the beloved, who in the end shows himself (80-87). The slender form, tearful eyes, lips murmuring his name, voice faltering, sensitive and tremulous, and hands clasped like the lotus bud, and heart expanding like the full blown flower (84). This is a fine example of Manikkavacagar's superb use of similes. To those tending the love plants, the Lord comes as the protecting mother (87) '*தாயேயாகி வளர்த்தனை போற்றி.*'

Sir P. Arunachalam has translated this '*ahaval*' in exquisite language, retaining much of the original melody;[2]

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1. Vide: *அச்சோப் பதிகம்: 'முத்திநெறி யறியாத மூர்க்க ரொடு முயல்வேனை'*

2. Vide: Siddhanta Deepika Vol. 1. No, 5, Translation of the Pilgrim's Progress by Sir. P. Arunachalam.

(11:59) *தாம் பிடித்தது சலியாத்*
*தழலது கண்ட மெழுகது போலத்*
*தொழுதுள முருகி அழுதுடல் கம்பித்*
*தாடியும் அலறியும் பாடியும் பரவியுந்*
... ... .... ....
*..................தருபரத் தொருவன் அவனியில் வந்து*

Line 59. " But letting not go what had been grasped,
Heart in prayer, melting like wax in sight of fire,
Weeping, trembling, dancing, shouting,
Singing, praising, gripping like jaws of babe
What was clutched; as a nail cleaves
The tender plants, so with pure ceaseless love
Swelling, overflowing, tossing sea-like,
Heart softening, body quivering
The world at me as a mad devil laughing,
Lost to shame, the town's ridicule, my ornament,
Unswerving, of appearance heedless,
Mad with yearning to know -
My goal, the supreme wonder -
In pain and wilderment, like calf for its mother crying
Even in dream, thinking not of other God -
Not making light of the gracious coming on earth
Of the supreme peerless One as Teacher
Go his holy feet clinging like shadow
Inseparably going before and after,
Looking ever towards the Peaceful One.
Bones melting, heart in agony of suspense,
The stream of love, its bank bursting
(The senses made one) crying aloud:-
" O Lord ", words faltering, hair standing on end
Hands clasped in worship, heart blossoming

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76 குருபரனெ யருளிய பெருமையை
... ...[illegible] ... ...
சாயா அன்பினை நாடொறுந் தழைப்பவர்

85. Eyes filling with tears of joy,
Daily fostering unfading love,-
To such as these O Lord, art Thou mother
And them, Thou dost rear.

88, Glory, Glory to Thee".

Sir P. Arunachalam recalls the poem of Walt Whitman who, in harmony with modern scientific thoughts, relates the planetary development and the gradual emergence of life through its successive ages until it stands as a conscious soul:

"I am the acme of things accomplished......
Afar down, I see the huge first nothing......
I know I was even there......
Immense have been the preparations for me,
Faithful and friendly the arms that have helped me.
Before I was born out of my mother
Generations guided me......
My embryo has never been torpid......
All forces have been steadily employed to complete and delight me,
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul."

In like manner, Manikkavacagar tells us of the progress of the soul and the guidance he received from the supreme Guru who crowned him with mercy. Here is the real essence of religious poetry that has sustained us in the darkest hours, when all other props had failed us :-

"My rendezvous is appointed - it is certain;
The Lord will be there and wait till I come,

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87 தாயே யாகி வளர்த்தனை போற்றி

On perfect terms,
The great camarado, the lover for whom
I pine, will be there."

These four poems, *(1) Siva puranam, (2) Keerthi Tiru Ahaval, (3) Tiruvandap Paguthi* and *(4) Pottit Tiru Ahaval,* form a garland of praise to the supreme Lord, who is the "Inspiration" of *Tiruvacagam,* and constitute a unit of composition. The Lord is adored as *(1) Namasivaya* 1.1, *(2) Deva-Deva* 2.122 *(3) Siva-Sakti* 3.65 and *(4) God-Guru* 4.75. The poet celebrated the first coming of the Lord into his life and projected the vision, in four different ways. *(1) Siva-puranam* gives prominence to the vision at *Tirupperun-thurai* and the initiation by the Guru, whose transcendant nature is extolled. *(2)* In *Keerthi Tiru Ahaval,* the praise of the Lord's manifestations of grace to his devotees and especially to the poet is rendered from Thillai. *(3) Tiruvandap Paguthi,* deals with the phenomenal universe and the relationship of the world of matter with Siva-Sakti in general, and with particular reference to the poet. *(4)* In '*Pottit Tiru Ahaval*' we get the 'Pilgrim's Progress' divided into two parts: (a) From the embryonic development to the time of the poet's initiation. (b) From the consecration by his God-Guru to the perfect bliss which he enjoyed at Thillai, towards the closing period of his life.

This *unity of idea and feeling* is the special charm of the poetic workmanship of Manikkavacagar in "*Tiruvacagam,*" which he dedicated at the feet of the Lord: ...............நாயேன்
குழைத்தசொன் மாலை கொண்டருள் போற்றி 4·220.

## D
## THE POETRY OF EXPERIENCE.
### 5

*Tiruc Cadagam:* The Sublime Cento.

*Place:* Tirupperunthurai.

*Quintessence:* The Beauty of divine Love.

*Interpretation:* The sublime cento must have been conceived as one intense experience. The poem is supposed to have been sung soon after the devotees of Siva had passed through the fire to the Lord's feet.[1] In these hundred stanzas, the poet recollects the beginnings of his consecrated life at *Tirupperunthurai*, when he was singled out for holier purposes.[2] The cento reveals the progress of the soul through the successive stages of religious experience till it loses itself in the rapture of a blissful union with the Lord. This has become the urgent motive working itself out, through all the details of technique. Such a moment of intense and rich experience cannot but be accomplished by emotional exaltation which will be part of the experience to be expressed. The hundred verses are divided into ten decads, the last word of each verse begins the following verse, while the ten odes with their hundred stanzas are linked together into an "*Anthathi*" (அந்தாதி) form of poetry. This form expresses the exaltation which surrounds the poet's experience as a whole.

The sub-headings of the ten odes into which the poem is divided, reveal in some measure the psychology

1. Pope's Tiruvacagam: Page 44 Introduction to the Sacred Cento.
2. William Wordsworth - Prelude: "I made no vows but vows were then made for me."

of the thoughts and mental conflicts of the poet. He unravels the secret of the instruction, he has received from his Guru regarding the destiny of the human soul and its progress from the world to the Lord. As he glances from earth to heaven, we too should try to see with his vision, breathe with his breath, enter into the minute articulations of his feelings and that would be the best way to interpet the spirit of this poem.

The key to such an interpretation can be found in certain gems of thought and expression in *Tiruvacagam* and other inspired religious literature. Tirumular in *Tirumantiram* wrote that the heart must melt in love and by love alone can one reach the changeless Gem,[1] and again he reiterated this truth in சிவனுக் குள்ளே சிவமணம் பூத்தது; "In the heart blossomed the fragrance of Siva." The opening stanza, in "*Achop Padigam*", contains the quintessence of '*Tiruvacagam*', the path of realisation through love, infused by the Guru, under the Kuruntha Tree at Tirupperunthurai.[2] In the poem, "Tiruvandap Paguthi", he condenses still further in a poignant phrase - *(பத்திவலையிற் படுவோன் காண்க)* 'He can be caught in the net of Love'[3] - the sum and substance of "The Sublime Cento". Soon after illumination, he must have asked the questions which he put in the lyric, "Tiruk Kotthumbi,"[4] stanza 2.

1. 'என்பே விறகா இறைச்சி யறுத்திட்டுப்
பொன்போற் கனலிற் பொரிய வறுப்பினும்
அன்போடுருக அகங் குழைவார்க் கன்றி
என்போன் மணியினை யெய்த வொண்ணாதே.
2. 'முத்திநெறி யறியாத மூர்க்கரொடு முயல்வேனைப்
பத்திநெறி யறிவித்துப் சிவமாக்கி யெனையாண்ட
3. 3. 42
4. 10. 216

*நானார்? என் உள்ளமார்? ஞானங்களார்?*
*என்னை யார் அறிவார்?*

"Who am I? What is Wisdom? My soul, what is it? Who would know me?" This Cento answers all these questions. He brings to the hidden issues of life those gifts of passionate perception which belong to a nature moving habitually on the plane of magnificence of mind. Here we hear a voice oracular, listening to every small details of the soul's life, observing its subtlest reactions upon all variety of contacts with the world, interpreting with acute knowledge and conducting the results of clear analysis towards a unifying principle of God. If we do not understand it, it is not because we want philosophy but because we lack poetry. Truly Tiruvacagam is an echo of magnificence of mind. Its rhythms have their correspondence in the condition of soul, and words whose accents will render always an authentic echo of that magnificence.

1. *(மெய்யுணர்தல்)* Religious enthusiasm.

Truth dawns in the life of our poet. This lyric on truth begins with the word *(மெய்)* - by which is meant the body, through which the realisation of truth must be felt. This key word also suggests, that the whole poem, deals with the progressive march of the soul while in the body, which is embodied in *(பொய்)* or unreal substance, to the blessedness of truth, *(மெய்யர் மெய்யனே)* the last line in the last lyric[1] (1: 401) of Tiruccadagam.

The opening stanza (5) describes the state of the poet when '*Siva Jnanam*' - pure wisdom, dawned on him:-

1. 10 ஆனந்தாதீதம், 401

*Stanza (5)* Rocked in a cold shiver, before Thy fragrant feet lowly I bow
With arms uplifted and tears streaming forth Lo! I arise
From dreams of fleeting joys to praise Thee, Lord I adore Thee
With flaming Love. Thus Thy bonds man clings to Thee Oh! for thy Grace! [1]

*Stanza (6)* Describes the changed attitudes and outlook of the poet after conversion. Self surrender becomes easy, after his illumination.
Hell - I'll not despise nor heavenly bliss aspire;
With Thy happy band of pilgrims to inspire,
Life's lures will I not heed, if guided by Thy Grace.
To none will I bow; my blessed Lord, but Thee.

Stanzas 7 & 8 reflect the reaction of the world on the spiritual novices. These are despised by the world who dub them as lunatics or whatever terms suit their scathing tongues. Pride and conceit are penalised even among the Gods and sages who stand in need of the Lord's mercy in their times of trouble. In stanza 7, sounds of words carry a heavy, emphatic,[2] resounding, the harsh sayings of the people who ridiculed him. The first foot of each line has these double consonants and the last foot ebbs in soft, liquid sounds,[3] which draws the contrast of the world's disdain on his tranquil mind.

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1. மெய்தான் அரும்பி...... கண்டு கொள்ளே 5, 1, 5.
2. மத்தமனத்தொடு... ஒத்தனவொத்தன... தத்தமனத்தன
3. நினைந்துருகி... மனநினைவில்... இரிந்தெவரும்

In the 9th stanza, he wants the Grace of the Lord so that his whole life will be a dedication to His Feet. In the 10th stanza, he craves for love unfailing, to do Him service. This is the main plea in the whole cento.

*Grant me love to love Thee who art love* 1. 10. 24

How wonderful that the Lord, heedless of the homage of the Gods, seeks to do good to the bound souls, in and through his operations on the universe of man and Gods - this is the theme of the 11th stanza. So the poet appeals to the Lord of dissolution, to save him from the bonds of deeds (வல்வினை 12). In stanza 13, he reveals the intimate relationship - the prize of his renunciation - with the Lord.[1] "He is my Lord: I am His chosen vassal."[2] Having moved in the courtly walk of life, the poet must have exercised his prerogative of overlordship over many lesser magnates. This analogy is used by the poet to show that having now sold his rights to the King of Kings,. his relationship with Him is that of a slave to a master. In the earlier stages of his initiation, the poet recurs to this favourite image of his (நானடியேன்). In the last stanza, he dwells on his unworthiness and the boundless love of the Lord to have shown him mercy. The flawless gem elevates underserved souls and brings low, the heavenly band. "T'was all Thy comedy?"[3] Thus ends the first act in the divine comedy of Tiruc Cadagam on the "Sublime Cento."

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1. நள்ளேன் புரந்தரன்
நின்றன் வார்கழற் கன்பெனக்கு நிரந்தர மாயருளாய்
நின்னை யேத்த முழுவதுமே

2. அவனெம் பிரானென்ன நானடியே னென்ன இப்பரிசே
13, 35

3. நகவேதகும்... ....என்னை நீ செய்த நாடகமே 14.40

## 2. அறிவுறுத்தல்: *The Impartation of divine knowledge.*

In the "Dawn of Truth", the soul experiences the Grace of God. "He revealed himself in love".[1] The prayer of the child of "Jnana" for perfect love, first uttered in stanza 10, (24) of the previous lyric is repeated in the opening stanza of this poem.

> 'Grant me Thy Grace to love Thee, my Lord
> With all my heart - Thou rock of precious gems!'[2] (43–44)

The opening line (நாடகத்தா லுன்னடியார்போல் நடித்து) continues the idea of the stage and actor. The poet has been selected to play a part in the divine comedy, as a child of Jn̉ana proceeding to the celestial city of God (Sivanagar). As is usual with inexperienced actors, he is nervous and hence stands in need of the understanding born of love and the faith that he is fitted to gȯ on the journey; given that assurance, he will not dread any ills, nor look for satisfaction elsewhere (Stanza 16).

In stanzas 17 and 18, the child of Jnana appeals with child-like simplicity, for the delights of the Lord's grace (51). He moves Him by his helplessness and loneliness, (வருந்துவனற் றமியேன் 52) and not by loving acts of service (Stanza 18).

The emphasis on dissatisfaction with, eternal forms of worship clearly shows that our poet has passed through the states of *Carya*, *Kriya* and *Yoga* paths of

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1. எனையுனக் காட்கொண்ட தன்மை 14 (38)
2. ஆடகச்சீர் மணிக்குன்றே இடையறா அன்புனக்கென்
ஊடகத்தே நின்றுருகத் தந்தருளெம் உடையானே
15 (43-44)

development and has entered the path of wisdom and implores for love's understanding to adore Him, who pervades heaven and earth, wind, light, the body and soul, of existence and non-existence, who is the ruler who moves the puppets of egoism on the stage of life (Stanza 19).

> " Gods worship Thee to gain more glory.........
> While I extol Thee to save me from the misery of birth."[1] (Stanza 20)

Have any of the heavenly hosts, Vedas, Sakti or true devotees seen Him (Stanza 21)? The poet's favourite device is to reveal a truth by the effective use of contrast as is done in stanza 22.

> " The *mighty* One laid hold on this *frail* one
> And *meekly* drew him beneath His *lofty* feet."[2]

The inability to assimilate this knowledge of His love made him weep for death. Note the pathos of the last line in stanza 22.

> தரியேன் நான் ஆமாறென் சாவேன் நான் சாவேனே.
> " I shall not bide: No longer endure! Oh welcome death! "

The poet's closing strains disclose a fear that his mind may drag him once again into the mire of worldly joys and so he counsels wisdom. The soul has to be cautioned to resist these snares and sorrows of attachment to the world.

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1. வாழ்த்துவதும் வானவர்கள் தாம் வாழ்வான்....
பாழ்த்தபிறப் பறுத்திடுவான் யானுமுன்னைப் பரவுவனே.

2. பெரியானை சிறியேனை ஆட்கொண்ட பெய்கழற்கீழ்

"He who was present in every part of thy body
And thrilled thy spirit, to Heaven has gone today!
Without seeing Him, thou livest here in vain"[1] 23.
(75–76).

The poet thus admonishes his soul to walk in the path of light and wisdom in these ways:-

1. By a plea for perfect, melting love (line 44).
2. By a cry for another experience of his grace (48).
3. By appealing to Him in your loneliness and helplessness (52).
4. By eagerness to reach Him who is seen through wisdom (56).
5. By adoring His immanence all around you (60).
6. By praising Him who can release you from bondage (64).
7. By dwelling on the wonder of your having seen Him, who is not seen by anyone (68).
8. By pondering on the greatness of His grace and your intense longing to reach Him (72).
9. By being constant to the love you had from Him, even though He has withdrawn Himself from you (75–76).
10. By the faith that "He alone can save you - He who is the saviour of all worldly ills" (78).

*ஆழாமற் காப்பானை ஏத்தாதே* - The negative force only accentates the need to do it. The slow and

1. ஊனெலாம் நின்றுருகப் புகுந்தாண்டான் இன்றுபோய்
வானுளான் காணாய்நீ மாளா வாழ்கின்றாயே

leisurely rhythm of this lyric is appropriate to a soliloquy, where the poet analyses the urgent need[1] for understanding his own nature aright.

The curtain drops after the second scene in the drama of the soul's ascent.

3. சுட்டறுத்தல்: *Dying to sense and self.*

In this lyric, each stanza has a reference to the poignant experience that transformed his life. A beautiful simile opens this section of the munificence of the Lord's mercy and on the beauty of his self-surrender. Stanza 25.

> Lord of the braided locks where Ganges is concealed.
> Rider on the bull and king of heavenly hosts –
> Thy devotees hear Thee praised: their hearts
> Pant and leap like the torrent in a deep ravine
> Setting them aside, Thou consecrated me –
> Should I not therefore burn with love towards Thee,
> As if my body from head to foot were made of heart?
> Should not my body be turned to eyes
> To rain streams of tears? My heart is stony
> My eyes are like wooden sockets, Oh sinful me![2]

The allusion to Siva as the bearer of the mighty Ganges on his locks, conveys the might of his grace which alone is the panacea of all sufferings. The ardour of the true devotees is contrasted with the frigidity of the poet. From the poetic imagery of the transformation of the body into a quivering heart and eyes,[3] we

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1. சூழ்கின்றாய் கேடுனக்குச் சொல்கின்றேன் பல்காலும் வீழ்கின்றாய் நீஅவலக் கடலாய வெள்ளத்தே 24.79-80.
2. 25: வெள்ளந்தாழ் விரிசடையாய்.... ... ...
3. Vide: Wordsworth's – "All things in nature respired".

are able to gange the depth of the poet's feelings after his illumination. He portrays the mental coma that has set in after he counselled his soul, "Right understanding" (2).

In this lyric, the poet reveals more of himself than in any other poem. "Bound in sin as I was, He bade me go to Him, freed me and showed His true nature and finally made me His own". What priceless love! Yet I have become an iron statue! How shall this end (26)? The first part of this stanza deals with the matchless "Karuna", followed by the lamentation that he is not moved by it adequately.[1] He illustrates in stanza 27, the wonder of his dedication. "Is it because I was classified with the devotees of God that Thou didst single me out, or because Thou couldst not find a better servant"? asks the poet touchingly. In stanza 28, is delineated a true 'Bhakta' who talks of none but the Lord, whose insignia he wears and who has made a votary of him, who is full of guile[2]. '*அவா வெள்ளக் கள்வனேனை.....ஆட்கொண்ட வண்ணந் தானே*' *(95)*. Stanza 29 speaks of the grand revelation: "Thou manifestedst Thyself to me. . . . Thy form, beauty, Thy lotus feet, I saw. . . Thou savedst my stray soul from the pangs of birth. How shall I think on Thee?"

*வண்ணந்தா னதுகாட்டி வடிவு காட்டி*
*மலர்க்கழல்க ளவைகாட்டி வழியற் றேனைத்*
*திண்ணந்தான் பிறவாமற் காத்தாட் கொண்டாய்*
*எம்பெருமான் என்சொல்லிச் சிந்திக்கேனே.*

*(29, 100)*

1. *வினையிலே கிடந்தேனைப் புகுந்து நின்று* .... ... ... 3, 26
2. *பேசிற்றும்... ஈசனே.... யென்றென்றே பேசிப்பேசி*
3' 28

The beauty of the poet's entire consecration is conveyed in languagefull, intense and deeply charged stanza 30[1] - a gem of rare lustre. He has a thorough control over 'speech rhythms and under his touch, they flow or harden, change, their focus or their tempo, and are expressive in the highest degree.' He says that when the light of God, as beautiful in form as the flame of the roseate lotuses in myriads, entered his heart, his soul transcended the visible thought, word and deed, he offered at His feet. The light so dazzling, has made him blind to this world for ever more. Dr. Pope says "This decad describes the mystic experience known as "Gnana Carithai." in which the devotee though able to discern God in and above all things, continues to perform outward rites and to avail himself of all means of grace."

Having once gazed at the unspeakable glory of the Lord, the poet is for ever coveting that vision beatific and this thirst in his soul energises the poem. The poet has translated the most subtle and delicate feelings into the most exquisite lines of poetry.

The following four stanzas 31-34, have an autobiographical ring. Before his conversion at Tirupperunthurai, he was a worldling, subject to conceit, pride of wealth and learning and to the

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1. சிந்தனைநின் தனக்காக்கி நாயி னேன்தன்
   கண்ணிணைநின் திருப்பாதப் போதுக் காக்கி
   வந்தனையும் அம்மலர்க்கே யாக்கி வாக்குன்
   மணிவார்த்தைக் காக்கி ஐம்புலன்க ளார
   வந்தெனை ஆட் கொண்டுள்ளே புகுந்த விச்சை
   மாலமுதப் பெருங்கடலே மலையே யுன்னைத்
   தந்தனைசெந் தாமரைக்கா டனைய மேனித்
   தனிச்சுடரே இரண்டுமிலித் தனிய னேற்கே.
   Vide: திருவாய் மொழி canto 'உன்னைத் தந்தனை'

fascination of women. Yet in the midst of the impetuousness of youth, *(மூர்க்கனேற்கே)* he practised chanting the holy rosary - ' Namacivaya '.

*அஞ்செழுத்தின் புணைபிடித்துக் கிடக்கின்றேனை........*
*கரைகாட்டி ஆட்கொண்டாய் (31. 107 - 108)*

In the sea of life, the raft of the "Five letters" (Worship of God) carries him onward till one day, he finds a spacious boat and enters it by the guidance of the Lord. There were other boats of the goodly saints too, keeping him company, but they had their way to the shore of bliss speedily, while he was left alone to voyage. This is one of the finest poetic imageries.[1] The Lord's radiance is likened to the fiery light gleaming from a forest of crimson lotus blooms, in the same manner as Dante described the appearance of the blessed souls in paradise in the image of "The white Hose of the Blest" in the Divine Comedy.

When the great lover is sighted, the beloved runs up in perfect love and consecrates all at His feet. (Stanza 30) Why did he do so? The answer is given in stanza 31,110–111. On earth before all the people, He gave me, unworthy as I am, a seat - not only that, but He also showed the beauty of His light and the grace of His feet, instructed me with the riches of wisdom, saved me from the cycle of births[2] and gave me bliss,

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1. Vide – Shelley's 'Lines written on the Euganean Hills'
'Many a green isle needs must be
In the wide sea of misery
Or the mariner a worn and wan
Could never voyage on"...

2. *நாயினுக்குத் தவிசிட்டு நாயினேற்கே*
*காட்டாதன வெல்லாங் காட்டிப் பின்னும்*
*கேளாத வெல்லாங் கேட்பித் தென்னை*
*மீட்டேயும் பிறவாமற் காத்தாட் கொண்டான்.* (82)

in the company of holy saints[1]. The last four lines,

*யாவர்கோன் என்னையும்வந் தாண்டு கொண்டான்*
*யாமார்க்குங் குடியல்லோம் யாதும் அஞ்சோம்*[2]
*'மேவினோம் அவனடியார் அடியாரோடும்*
*மேன்மேலுங் குடைந்தாடி யாடுவோமே'*

(*34: 119–120*)

proclaim the triumphant joy of the poet who dedicated himself to the service of God. Self surrender is a necessary step in the soul's ascent to Śivanagar.

Through the mind of the poet, an endless stream of thoughts, memories, emotions and sensations are fused into a miracle of art, transmuting his personal experiences into something universal and impersonal.

4. ஆத்தும சுத்தி: *The Soul's Purification.*

This ode is in the form of an address to the soul, in which feeling is veiled and the didactic element predominates. The pros and cons of the need for purification are set forth. The greatest impediment to purity of soul is the body, to exterminate which the poet suggests extrême measures as falling into the sea or purging by fire etc. Like the attraction of the bee to the bright flowers, the poet from the background attracts his soul to be drawn to God, by dwelling on his irresistible honey of joy - a compound of "*arul* and *arivu*" - grace and wisdom.

The poet's peculiar sensibility is brought out in the opening stanza which swells with the tide of frustration. Such phrases as '*ஆடுகின்றிலை – பாடுகின்றிலை – சூடுகின்றிலை – தேடுகின்றிலை*' help to interpret the spirit of

1. *அடியார்தம் அடியனுக்கி அச்சந்தீர்த் தாட்கொண்டான்* 33.
2. Vide *அப்பர் - 'நாமார்க்குங் குடியல்லோம் நமனையஞ்சோம்.'*

the ode. The poet addresses the soul (பிணநெஞ்சே) that surrendering the self alone will not do, and urges it to shed its sluggishness, by doing holy acts (35). The father, 'எந்தையை... பிரிவிலாத இன்னருள்கள் பெற்றிருந்து...' granted him the sweetest gifts of grace and yet there was a tendency in his soul to be treacherous and deceitful (36). His revulsion is expressed in stanza 37 - 'மடநெஞ்சே....... கீறுகின்றிலை கெடுவதுன் பரிசிது.' Quickly, he consoles himself that the Lord is sure to claim him in spite of his fickleness. How tenderly he speaks of the Lord's Grace - "விரைமலர்த் திருப்பாதம், முற்றிலா இளந்தளிர் பிரிந்திருந்து" which is like the tender shoots of trees in spring and contrasts it with the hard thickened nature of his soul.[1] (38. 136)

At this stage, the poet regrets that his love was not equal to the grace he had received from God. His insensible mind was pulling him in the wrong path. Stanza 40 depicts his inability to shed attachment (உகுவதாவதும்) to melt in love (நெகுவதாவதும்) to enter the golden city (புகுவதாவதும் பொன்னகர்) and enjoy infinite bliss (மிகுவதாவதும்). Purity of soul is essential to union with God. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus Christ also said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Separation from the Lord and all the sufferings it entails, are not of His will but are due to the impurity of the heart. The prick of separation hurts him (இணையின் பாகமும் பிரிவது திருக்குறிப்பன்று). The absence of his sweetest Lord - (குறுகிலேன் நெடுங்காலம்) and life seems a cruel exile. Then steeped with poignant pathos, we hear his melting cry: "Oh, where is my

1. நின், அறிவும் நின் பெருமையும் அளவறுக் கில்லேனே -136

beloved? He, who pointed the way to bliss, whose love exceeded that of a mother, is not seen by me now, anywhere?"

........என்னை நன்னெறி காட்டித்
தாயி லாகிய இன்னருள் புரிந்தான்
தலைவனை நனி காணேன்' (43: 154–156)

He saw Him once, but now the pollution in his heart veils Him; grief and remorse so work upon his feelings that he longs to put an end to his misery by a fall from a rock or a dive into the sea or a plunge into fire. The temporary eclipse in his progress to God is due to lethargy and lurking impurity of his soul and this idea is conveyed with vivid suggestion and mystic potency. " Midst the alluring wiles of pretty maids, I was like the broken curds, under the churning rod... Oh, the folly of biding in the body without hastening to the city of the Lord and enjoying his sweet bliss?"[1] Thus the message purity of heart as the most powerful lens to see God with, is vindicated in this ode.

5. கைம்மாறு கொடுத்தல்: *Rendering a Return.*

A pure life - a purified heart can be a noble offering to the Lord. Only a pure soul can commingle with the peerless purity of the Lord. The poet expresses the yearing for such consummation, in the whole of this poem but specially in stanza 45, 50 and 53.

In the first verse, the poet bewails that he cannot see the essence of his life - the ultimate reality of the

1. ... .... ... நோக்கியர் படிறிடை மத்திடு தயிராகித்
தேனி லாவிய திருவருள் புரிந்தவென்
சிவனகர் புகப்போகேன்
ஊனி லாவியை ஓம்புதற் பொருட்டினும்
உண்டுடுத் திருந்தேனே —160

soul. What he saw was pain. The Lord bade him 'come', but he cannot taste his bliss yet. He can only absorb sorrow.

2. Many are the interpretations given of this opening stanza in this lyric, and particularly of the phrase 'இருகை யானையை'. Dr. Pope interprets it as "an elephant with two trunks[1] would be utterly lost; so I, serving two masters, the heavenly Master and the sense world".

3. Professor K. Subramanya Pillai explains that like the elephant which in its arrogance fails to recognise its nature and that of others, so the poet too failed to understand his nature and that of God, out of his egoism.[2]

Mr. S. A. Tirumalai Kolundu Pillai in his History of Tamil Literature, chapter XVIII, dealing with Sri Manikkavacagar's poems gives the following meaning to this stanza. "The proboscis is a unique organ of the elephant; it is at once its hand and nostrils; in a single act, it discharges two functions, namely the functions of touch and smell. The inability which our sage attributes to himself is his incapacity to comprehend at one single glance the true nature of the soul which is but the conjunction of mind and matter . . . .

1. Vide Pope's Tiruvacagam. Page 62: Note 161.

இருகை யானையை ஒத்திருந் தென்னுளக்
கருவை யான்கண் டிலேன்கண்ட தெய்வமே
வருக வென்று பணித்தனை வானுளோர்க்
கொருவ னேகிற்றி லேன்கிற்பன் உண்ணவே.

2. Vide திருவாசகம்: மூலமும் உரையும். கா, சுப்பிரமணிய பிள்ளை. Page-115 - குறிப்பு.

The Saiva theologian understands the true nature of the universe by looking at both its aspects at a single glance just as the proboscis at one grasp understands both the senses of touch and smell. Thus the stanza gently exposes the folly of the schools of materialism and idealism.[1]"

This is no doubt an ingenious construction from a learned critic of Tiruvacagam, but it does "immense injustice to the grander meaning which underlies the words", to quote the critics own words which he applied to Dr. Pope. It is to rescue Tiruvacagam from the hands of earnest theologians, that this study is undertaken, and the acid tests of great poetry were clearly enunciated in the introduction to this thesis. Tiruvacagam is a noble poem written by a firstrate, pure poet, before it was metamorphosed into a work on Saiva philosophy. To read philosophy and apply the truths of the 'Meykanda Sastras' to every line of its beautiful poetry, is to do the gravest wrong to poet Manikkavacagar. If by means of poetry, we fail to interpret the beauty and sublimity of Tiruvacagam, then the fault is ours, that we are not poets[2].

Turning once again our attention to the first stanza, already quoted, let us place it in relation to the last stanza in the ode on the purity of the soul 4:44. There we saw the poet was gripped firm in the pleasures of the fair maidens. He was a prey to the vultures of lust, and merely eating and drinking, he knew no peace. Previously in stanza 43, he had raised the cry. "Oh, where is my beloved?" Thus moved by remorse and pining, his poetic emotion leaps all bounds, as he begins this ode (5) on a "noble response".

1. Vide: Siddhanta Deepika: Vol. V. No. 8. Page 116.
2. Caivism in South India by Carpenter: Page 347.

He addresses his Lord thus:-

*Stanza 45:* "Though Thou bade me "come",
I could not join Thee;
I could not taste Thy bliss, sole Lord of the Gods.
Pain was all I saw -
Relishing in *its* poison, like the wild elephant[1]
I see Thee not, my Life of Life"

The images thus recalled, evoke a host of associations. Searching for the beloved who had called him, he become ensnared by carnal desires such as the image of the elephant suggests, and everywhere he saw the face of sorrow. The memory of the Guru and his holy saints leaving him alone to tarry here, while they went away, revives the thought that because he was not fit to enjoy the bliss divine, he was left behind to wail in grief. All these memories well up within him, in the lament, "I see Thee not, My Life of Life"[2]

Thus poetry knits these cries together in obedience not to common but to transcendental laws, since it serves something which is outside human comprehension, that is beauty. That is the true spirit of poetry, the consciousness of which like the pure flame burning in our hearts, can guard the production of poetry from the taint of alloy.

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1. இருகை யானையை...5,45. இருகை - இருங்கை - பெரிய துதிக்கை,
Vide திருவாசகம்: மூலமும் உரையும்: கா. சுப்பிரமணிய பிள்ளை. p. 115. குறிப்பு.
We interpret this to mean a wild elephant with the proboscis,the organ of touch and smell well developed.

2. 'என் உளக் கருவையான் கண்டிலேன்.'

In the remaining stanzas in this ode, the poet expresses his intense yearning to unite with the Lord, to render a fit return for his immeasurable love. "My grief is having beheld Thee, I keep away from Thee"- "எல்லையில் கழல்கண்டும் பிரிந்தனன்". In 53rd stanza, he recounts his experience of illumination:

> Freed me from bonds to make me thine -
> Thy faithful saints and all others saw
> Thee elevating me in Thy Temple court -
> Ah, debassed self, who knew not Thy Chit-
> Sakti.[1]

In the last stanza, he pleads that the Lord of wisdom should bear with his ignorance, for knowing his true nature, the supreme Lord of grace had initiated him. The poet dedicates himself - a fitting receptacle of the Lord's grace. On how much we give, depends also our capacity of receiving 'Gnana' from Him.[2]

The poem began on a strain of frustration. There was a growing realisation that the essence that moved the phenomenal universe mingled with it like the oil within the seed. This same light of wisdom elevated the poet to behold him and he in turn makes his humble offering. This reciprocal response, the soul's realisation of its inseparable nature with the Lord, forms the burden of the whole lyric.

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1. *பட்டி மண்டபம் ஏற்றினை ஏற்றினை*
   *எட்டி னொடிரண் டும்அறி யேனையே (196)*

2. Vide Coleridge: Ode to Dejection: "Oh lady! we receive but what we give."

## 6. அநுபோக சுத்தி:

*The Overflowing of Joy and The Purging of Experience.*

Attachment to the world of senses is given up by the poet and now begins the purging of his objective experiences. This is done by his relishing the overflowing joy of those who are in tune with the infinite.

In stanza 56. he chides himself for his devotion to the fleeting adventures of life which has forced him to undergo the ways of the flesh while the true devotees of God with their fixed goal of truth, have reached Him.

"Release me too from the fetters of ignorance"[1] is his prayer in stanza 57. The urgency of the request is seen when he bids the Lord step from His golden city[2], and come down with Arul-Sakti so that he may not long wander like a sightless pig.[3] What a combination of pity, abject helplessness and humiliation is condensed in this succinct simile!

Every epithet is charged with the vital spark, as the picture of the saints, hoary with penance and yet denied his presence, rises before our eyes in stanza 58. This picture is poised against the background of the Lord's granting grace to the poet alone. Alas! he is not equal to the enjoyment of this priceless love. He does not end his vile body nor pine to see His face. The poetic art finds a favourite device in the question and

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1. இருள் நீக்கி
2. பொன்னகர்வாய்

கண்கெட்ட, ஊரேறு யிங்குழல் வேனோ

answer method. He asks an appealing question to the Lord. "On what shall I soar to Thee, if not on the wings of Love?[1]

In the remaining stanzas, he reiterates the joy of the holy saints who hold communion with the Lord. The idea of God's justice is worked out in stanza 61. Those who cling on to the Lord's love attain Him, while those like himself who are whirled in the carnal desires, court ruin. The lines 61. 227

... ... ... ... ... ...ஒருத்திவாய்
துடித்த வாறுந் துகிலிறையே
சோர்ந்த வாறும் முகங்குறுவேர்
பொடித்த வாறு மிவையுணர்ந்து
கேடென் றனக்கே சூழ்ந்தேனே

reveal certain marked traits in the personality of our poet. Swami Vedachalam finds in it a reference to a particular lady, while many others are inclined to interpret the passage, as revealing a general tendency in the poet's nature. That he was at certain periods of his life subject to the charms of the feminine sex is unmistakeable, from the frequent references to this aspect of his frailty.

1. மலமாக் குரம்பை யிதுமாய்க்க
மாட்டேன் மணியே உனைக்காண்பான்
அலவா நிற்கும் அன்பிலேன்
என்கொண் டெழுகேன் எம்மானே (58)

Vide 'அன்பும் சிவமும் இரண்டென்பர் அறிவிலார்'
- திருமந்திரம்

அயரா அன்பின் அரன்கழல் செலுமே - Siva Jnana Bodham XI.

In stanza 62, he proclaims his servitude to the Lord whom he addresses in the most endearing terms as 'Sweetness of bliss,' 'Tranquil joy',' Radiant light and Ecstasy of Love'.

These are not a down pour of words used by a clever wielder of verse, but the words that come out from the depth of emotional experience - after a rapturous address to the Lord, he clinches it in this unique mode: "Will it not evoke Thy laughter, if I say: 'I am Thine and Thou art mine[1]?'

"I stand open to Thy sporting glee". A heaving of a thousand sighs is heard as the poet exclaims in stanza 63: "Father mine! Lord whose nature is unknown to others - Is it meet that Thou forsake me, low as I am, after casting Thy spell on me? Who will be my guide? Great Sire, what becomes of me? Where shall I seek shelter? Father of gleaming resplendence!"

The shelter of the one eternal self is the reward for which the poet pines for and in stanza 64, the first ascent into blessedness is marked.

> " In the company of Thy saints,
> Gladly I view Thy sacred form,
> And stand shameless at my lack of love."[2]

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1. தேனைப் பாலைக் கன்னலின் தெளிவை யொளியைத்
தெளிந்தார் தம்
ஊனை உருக்கும் உடையானை உம்பரானை வம்பனேன்
நானின் னடியேன் நீயென்னை யாண்டா யென்றால்
அடியேற்குத்
தானுஞ் சிரித்தே யருளலாந் தன்மை யாமென் தன்மையே.
(62)

2. நகுவேன் பண்டு தோணோக்கி நாண மில்லா நாயினேன்
நெகுமன் பில்லை நினைக்காண.

In this ode, the poet strikes a chord of optimism. He looks at the cheerful band of pilgrims journeying to eternity and he too determines to rise on the wings of love and follow them. There is a faltering break in the voice in stanza 63 followed by the comforting vision of attainment, communicated by the holy saints.

The lyric is permeated with the joy of fulfilment and the poet viewing the blissful joy of the saints, seeks to purge himself from the last traces of attachments and thereby to reunite in everlasting bliss with the Lord and his true devotees.

7. காருணியத்திரங்கல்:

*The Overwhelming Sense of The Divine Compassion.*

The vision of attaining the Feet of God fades away and he realises that the inevitable obstacles which bar his way are due to the pangs of birth. So he begins this ode on the note: "No longer will I abide in the body." How long can one remain a passive spectator, viewing others' happiness, however joyful that sight is? Attachment must glow to the "Matchless, Supreme, Spotless One, the Lord who holds the mystic Dance at Thillai" 65. Adoration to the Lord in His formless and manifested aspects is one of the effective ways of realisation, as expounded by Manikkavacagar. The whole poem of Tiruvacagam is a poetic garland of praises to the Lord.

This idea is conveyed by Tiruvalluvar also in the Kural-

பற்றுக பற்றற்றான் பற்றினை அப்பற்றைப்
பற்றுக பற்று விடற்கு.

and reiterated by our poet throughout Tiruvacagam as in the lines from *Tiru Ammanai*

> *பற்றியிப் பாசத்தைப் பற்றறநாம் பற்றுவான்*
> *பற்றியபே ரானந்தம் பாடுதுங்காண் அம்மானாய்.*

Detachment from the world and attachment to the Lord, form the touchstones of the poetic faith of Manikkavacagar, and this is skilfully developed in this poem. The cry for liberation is heard in one half of each line in each verse and the peals of praise resound on the other side. The bhava of Praise and 'Karunai' (Compassion) mingle in these lines.

> 'தரிக்கிலேன் காயவாழ்க்கை சங்கரா போற்றி'
> 'No longer will I abide in the body - Great Ruler Hail.
> 'போற்றியோ நமச்சிவாய புகலிடம் பிறிதொன்றில்லை'
> 'Glory to Thee, Namacivaya! Refuge have I none but in Thee.'

Feeling rises high when glorifying the Lord and thus strengthening his attachment, but ebbs when he paints the pitiable picture of himself - forlorn and lost on earth. Thus the pendulum of emotion swings to and fro. Adoration follows prostration as in stanzas 71 and 72. "Glory to Thee Supreme One, Peerless Father, Glory to Thee! Glory to Thee, Light of the Gods, Our tender shoot of Love, Hail!

> Bid me arise and come to Thee - All Hail!
> And give me Thy blessed Feet (Grace) - All Hail!
> My forlorn self will not feel so lonely then."[1]

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1. ஒருவனே போற்றி ஒப்பில் அப்பனே போற்றி வானோர்
குருவனே போற்றி எங்கள் கோமளக் கொழுந்து போற்றி
வருகவென் றென்னை நின்பால் வாங்கிட வேண்டும் போற்றி
தருகநின் பாதம் போற்றி தமியனேன் தனிமை தீர்த்தே,

Such is the prayer of the poor in heart, begging for alms at the hands of the Great Giver in sweet simplicity and utter forlornness. That out of the abundance of His Love, He will give succour to the needy, is expressed in stanza 73 and the poem ends by glorifying the universal Lord who is the begetter of fife's forms and the omega of existence, and who cannot be attained through the world of perception.

The plaintive strains of this lyric blend with the poet's title and content - begging for Divine Mercy *(இரங்கல்)*. The lyric may be cited as one of the exquisite examples of the rasa of '*Karuna*' or Mercy, harmonising with the blithesome praises or the bhava of exultation. The joyous melody of the skylark greeting the sun of glory and the tender strains of the nightingale expressing its lovelorn melancholy in the shades of night, compose a rare symphony, as is illustrated in the following stanza[1] (70).

"Myself I despise: Hail, Hail my Lord!
Thyself I'll not blame: Hail, Gracious Feet laid on me!
To bear with wrongs is the duty of the Wise, Hail!
Oh, Take my Life: my Lord of Heaven, Hail!"

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1. *இழித்தனன் என்னை யானே எம்பிரான் போற்றி போற்றி*
*பழித்திலேன் உன்னை என்னை யாளுடைப் பாதம் போற்றி*
*பிழைத்தவை பொறுக்கை யெல்லாம் பெரியவர் கடமை (போற்றி*
*ஒழித்திடிவ் வாழ்க்கை போற்றி உம்பர்நாட் டெம்பிரானே* (70)

Cf. St. Appar: *தன்னை யடைந்தார் வினைதீர்ப தன்றோ*
*தலையா யவர்தங் கடனா வதுதான்*

St. Sundramurti: *பிழையுள்ள பொறுத்திடுவரென் றடியேன் (பிழைத்தக்கால்*
*பழியதனைப் பாராதே ... ... ...*

The melody in the above stanza flows in two distinct channels and yet the music of the lark and nightingale, the pulsations of joy and sadness commingle in the sweetest degree. This is the poetry of "Incantation", we find in Tiruvacagam. Tirumular in "*Tiru Mantiram*" embodies the highest Hindu Philosophy in poetic form and his poetry is only a vesture, a covering for his thoughts but in Tiruvacagam, poetry is the quintessence of Manikkavacagar's experiences. The spirit of his poetry is also that of his life - a life of keen but calm meditative joy, attained by direct communion with the Author of Supreme Good and Beauty.

8. ஆனந்தத் தழுந்தல்:

*Mystic Union and The Unfolding of Bliss.*

The key to this poem is found in the last line of the previous lyric: "Thou, who cannot be realised by the five senses."[1] In the first stanza of this poem, he seeks to find out the open sesame to divine union. The door to bliss cannot be unlocked by the key of the senses - not by cognition nor by conation. The soul is now on the eighth step of its ascent. The man of God has gained entrance to eternity by trampling the objective consciousness but still preserving his identity in the body.[2] Then comes the tug, the conflict which is so exquisitely expresed in the first stanza of this poem (8). Love pleads at the door of the beloved for mercy as seen in the ode on "Divine Compassion,',

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1. 'ஐம்புலன்கள் நின்னைப் புணர்கிலாப் புணர்க்கை யானே' (280)

2. Vide Saiva Siddhanta. Page 199 by V. Paranjoti.

(காருணியத் திரங்கல்) but is told the highest consummation of mystic union is not possible in the body and the only key to bliss is the intense Love of the '*Bhakta*'.

The poet recounts how the self has been subjugated, taught wisdom, made pure and dedicated to His Feet, from the day when he first sowed the seeds of Love at Tirupperunthurai. But the Lord still found him lacking in Love, to attain His Feet. The seed of Love sown at Tirupperunthurai took shoot and the tender plant withstood sun, rain, and wind and passing through the phases of growth gave out the bud, rosy with the promise of love's fulfillment, as is shown in this canto on "The unfolding of Bliss" (ஆனந்தத் தழுந்தல்). In the next lyric on the "Ecstasy of Realisation" (ஆனந்த பரவசம்) we see the opening of the flower of Love and in the last lyric on "The Baptism of Bliss" (ஆனந்தா தீதம்) we see the fully blossomed flower of Love. Thus the Sacred Cents (திருச்சதகம்) is an epitome of man's Love for God.

The first stanza is one of the most difficult verses in the poem,[1] for the soul, on the threshold of infinite joy, sings in the language of eternity. The poet sinks into rapture and we only hear the rhythmic beats of his chastened heart, as he stands before the Great Lover:

> My Lovely Sire! My Lord!
> When Thou found me good and fit enough,

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1 புணர்ப்பதொக்க எந்தை யென்னை யாண்டு பூண நோக்கினாய்
புணர்ப்பதன்றி தென்ற போது நின்னொ டென்னொ டென்னி
புணர்ப்பதாக அன்றி தாக அன்பு நின்க ழற்கணே [தாம்
புணர்ப்பதாக அங்க ணாள புங்க மான போகமே (75)

Vide Pope's Translation P. 72

Thou charmed me by Thy look and drew me nigh.
Now it seems, I can never be one with Thee
'Of what use am I?' Ah! Let this (body) die
Naught else but love alone can join us
In mystic union, Bliss most rare.[1]

In the rest of the poem, each one of the states of feeling pictured in the above stanza, is developed more fully.

In pursuit of "Sivabhoga", the poet tells us in stanza 76, he would loathe the choicest delights of Indra and would cleave asunder the impediment of the body. Eyes streaming with tears, and hands clasped in lowly prayer, he sings thus: "My *sole* Lord, I'll not live save in Thee."[2] In stanza 77, the music of the vowels and labials weave an unearthly spell, something like the witchery of music that we find in Coleridge's "Christabel," when she lay entranced.[3] The poet prays: "Though this deceitful body is compounded of falsehood, my Master and Lord of Uma make that perfect Love of Thy True Saints, rest on me too" (*மெய்கலந்த அன்ப ரன்பெ னக்குமாக வேண்டும் 292*). In stanza 78, the appeal for Love takes a redounding certainty

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1. Emendations suggested:–
   (1) What keeps me back from union with Thee
   (2) How can I ever commune with Thee?
   Here the hindrance of the body on one side and on the other, his lack of love are the factors that prevent his final union with the Lord.
2. *ஏக நின்கழலிணை யலாதிலேனென் எம்பிரான்*
3. *ஐய நின்ன தல்ல தில்லை மற்றோர் பற்று வஞ்சனேன்*
   *பொய்க லந்த தல்ல தில்லை பொய்ம்மை யேனென் எம்பிரான்*
   *மைக லந்த கண்ணி பங்க வந்து நின்க ழற்கணே*
   *மெய்க லந்த அன்ப ரன்பெ னக்கு மாக வேண்டுமே.*

(வேண்டும் நின்கழற்க ணன்பு 293). It is an ultimatum and he is prepared to seek births which he loathes, if only to perfect His Love (மாண்டுமாண்டு வந்துவந்து மன்னநின் வணங்கவே 296). The repetition of the words gives force and beauty to the appeal. The poet praises the Lord both as the sole reality as well as transcending thoughts and words. He who is all the world, cannot be seen by the senses (stanza 79). Touching the heart strings is the Pathos in stanza 80, where the poet pleads for consummation of his love. "Save a guileless child by granting it Oneness with Thee" "பைத வாவதென்று பாதுகாத் திரங்கு."

In stanza 83, he recalls those dark days before he saw the light of God - He, who transcends thought and speech. Having seen His true nature, he still held up and checked from the enjoyment of bliss. "Is there any way to end this life?" (வெந்தையா விழுந்திலேனென் உள்ளம் வெள்கி விண்டிலேன் 315).

He implies that his Love does not soar so high, because of the weight of mortality and this is his greatest hindrance. Therefore in the last stanza, he addresses his heart as "Iron–heart,"[1] owing to its weariness and hardness to absorb Love. Sweetness of Grace filled his heart when the Loved Feet of the Lord took His abode within his heart. But alas! the iron heart was not responsive to the warmth of His Love, and the association of the fire of Love that failed to burn his heart with intense Love for the Lord, leads him to think of exterminating such a filthy body by setting it on fire, cremating it before its appointed time. What a wealth of imagery lies hidden in this

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1. இருப்பு நெஞ்சம் (84): Note the usage இருப்பு for இரும்பு to stress rigidity.

stanza which ends with the poet's question, "Is it ignorance that makes me tarry here and fondly think You and I are still Lovers?"[1] Some critics rightly interpret the last line to refer to the order of his Guru to tarry on earth while all the other saints passed through the fire to join the Lord. Analysis becomes painful as the poet's feelings are borne on the wings of ecstasy and words become only sounds of the throbbings of the heart of the poet as he addresses the Great Heart of the Majestic Lover.

9. ஆனந்தபரவசம்: *Ecstasy of Realisation.*

The poem opens on a striking metaphor (**விச்சுக் கேடுபொய்க் காகா தென்றிங் கெனைவைத்தாய் 85**). "That the seed of falsehood may thrive, Thou hast kept me here!" - an ironic remark of a frustrated soul. If it be true that the Lord loved him and he loved the Lord, then why was he left alone, while all His companions went to Him? The answer is given in the metaphor. He was the seed of lies, and in the school of severe discipline, he had to be transmuted, into a seed of Truth.

We imagine the Lord querying him as to why he cannot remain longer on earth, to which the poet replied in stanza 86. He was the scorn of the world and put to dire humiliation after relinquishing the poet of the Royal Minister to become a meek apostle. "No longer can I bide in this world of mockery, I love Thee; I surrender; I am Thine."[2] 327–328.

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1. *விருப்பு முண்டு நின்கண் என்கண்*
*என்பதென் அவிச்சையே* **(84-320)**

2. *பேசப் பட்டேன் நின்னடி யாரில் திருநீறே*
*பூசப் பட்டேன் பூதல ரால்உன் அடியானென்*
*றேசப் பட்டேன் இனிப்படு கின்ற தமையாதால்*
*ஆசைப் பட்டேன் ஆட்பட் டேன்உன் அடியேனே* **(86)**

Again and again rises the surging cry, "When can I see Thee face to face as I once saw Thee?"[1] Love's quarrelsome mood is prominent here as the poet argues not in wrath but in tender love, and threat of Death:

'.........செத்தே போயினேன்
ஏணாணில்லா நாயினேன் என்கொண் டெழுகேன்
எம்மானே.'

"I die -
On what prop can I rise again to come to Thee?"

Stanza 89 is a good example where his rebellious feelings calm down to a note of resignation. The blessed saints have reached the City of God (Siva Nagar) whereas he and his shadow Falsehood roam awhile on earth.[2] How did he fail and they succeed? The ideal pilgrim of Eternity is delineated in stanza 90: lines 343–344:

'அறவே நின்னைச் சேர்ந்த அடியார் மற்றொன் றறியாதார்
சிறவே செய்து வழிவந்து சிவனே நின்தாள் சேர்ந்தாரே'

"These inheritors of peerless, true love,
Knowing none else, clinging to Him alone for Grace,
And dedicating their lives for the service of God,
They attain Thee." (90)

Once again he pleads for perfect Love from the Lord. Without this prop, he shall drown in grief.

'... ... ... உன் தாளிணை யன்புக்
காராய் அடியேன் அயலே மயல்கொண் டழுகேனே'

1. உன்னைக் கண்ணாரக் காணுமாறு காணேனே 87. 332
காணுமாறு காணேன் உன்னை அந்நாட் கண்டேனும் 88. 333

2. '... ... சிவமா நகர்குறுகப்
போனாரடியார் யானும் பொய்யும் புறமே போந்தோமே'

His hapless plight is portrayed by the simile of the blind cow. There is tragic helplessness invested in the sight of a blind cow who goes daily to graze with the other cows and one day she discovers that her comrades have gone away leaving her alone. So felt the poet when the holy saints left him alone at Tirupperunthurai. Again he describes the procession of saints, who with overpowering love, souls melting like wax in fire, moved in adoration to the gleaming golden Feet of the Lord.[1]

Hope that springs eternal in the human heart lifts the poet from despair and stanzas 93 and 94 are a testimony of his profound faith, in his ultimate union with His Father, Mother, Beloved, King - all relationships fused in the One Supreme Lord. The last stanza breathes of eager optimism and love;

"I am false, my heart is false; False too is my love;
Though a sinner, if I weep, shall I not attain Thee?
Essence of sweetness, freshness, love and illumination
Great Lord! Perfect my Love to come to Thee."[2]

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1. ... ... *அன்பாம் மனமாய் அழல்சேர்ந்த*
*மெழுகே யன்னார் மின்னார் பொன்னார் கழல்கண்டு*
*தொழுதே யுன்னைத் தொடர்ந்தா ரோடும் தொடராதே*
***...92***

2. *யானே பொய் என்நெஞ்சும் பொய் என்அன்பும்பொய்*
*ஆனால் வினையேன் அழுதால் உன்னைப் பெறலாமே*
*தேனே அமுதே கரும்பின் தெளிவே தித்திக்கும்*
*மானே அருளாய் அடியேன் உனைவந் துறுமாறே.* ***94***

10. ஆனந்தாதீதம்: *The Rapture of Bliss:*

The soul started on its journey upward when the first benign rays of the sun of God, awakened in from the stupor of ignorance and bondage to the three 'Malas'. Grace lit up the soul to understand its nature and willed that once it rose up on the strong, adamentive wings of Love, there would be no *Return* *(போக்குவரவு)*[1]. This impossibility of Return to the nest of gloom is what is foreshadowed in the last lyric of Tiruc Cadagam.

The soul is on its last journey. The poet has circumscribed the arc of Love. The soul with its last vestige of mortality, by which is meant the cloak of unreality, change, and ignorance, is in the throes of its last cleaning and purging. In lyric 9 the poet distinguishes the state of his soul and contrasts it with that of the saints who have completely been purified and who have merged in perfect Love with their Beloved Light.

*மெய்மை அன்பருன் மெய்மை மேவினர் (95)*

That wave of ecstasy ebbs as he realises the choking obstacle of his body that keeps him yet away from bliss. This leads him to intensify his love for the Lord and buoys him with the hope that sooner he gets rid of the body-barrier, the better for his happiness which consists of complete identity with the Light. This idea is so vividly conveyed by the frequent references to 'Light' and 'Darkness' *(மெய், பொய்)* Reality and Unreality and the saints of God and himself.

1. See Sivagnana Botham Sutra 2 "'He stands in 'Samavaya' union with His Gnana Sakti and causes the souls to undergo the processes of evolution (births) snd return (Samharam) by including their good and bad acts." Translation by J. M. Nallaswamy Pillai.

In stanza 96, he argues whether it was meet that the Lord should desert him in this world of sin, after He had owned him. Here follows a clear portrait of himself:

"*பொருத்த மின்மையேன் பொய்மை யுண்மையேன்*" (97)

Then came his wonderful conversion:
"*வருத்த மின்மையேன், வஞ்ச முண்மையேன்*"

In spite of his depraved nature, the magnanimity of the Lord sought him. After initiating him, He and His followers[1] withdrew and he was left alone to bemoan his fate. He asks whether there was anything wrong in his complaint?

In stanza 98, he sings of the limitless love of the Lord in strains of unpremediated beauty. He looks for no return of love from "my empty and stony heart." The Lord converted his hardness into mellowing softness of a fruit, till he became His Lover "*நின் கழற் கன்பனுக்கினும்.*" "Boundless is thy Love, dear Lord, Whate'er I do, Thou wilt show me Thy saving Grace"[2] 375–376. The poet quells his despondancy and fear by the comforting thought, "*ஏதுகொண்டு நான் ஏது செய்யினும்*", that the never-failing, never weakening love of God will protect him. No more strains of the nightingale's song do we hear but the poet like the lark sings, hidden in the Light of 'Jnana'. From the firmament of infinity, radiant with the light of God,

1. *அருள் செய் அன்பரும் நீயும் 97-371*. Cf, Christ bidding his disciples in St. John's Gospel 'Abide in me and I in you.' Siva Gnana bodham Sutra XII.

2 *எல்லை யில்லைநின் கருணை யெம்பிரான்*
*ஏது கொண்டுநான் ஏது செய்யினும்*
*வல்லை யேயெனக் கின்னு முன்கழல்*
*காட்டி மீட்கவும் மறுவில் வானனே*

he sings his song of joy. We listen to the heavenly melodies in rapture and our hearts register not the measure of the song but thrills and sensations sweet.

Translation fails to communicate the original fervour of following stanza (99)[1].

Here, poetic art exhibits four dances, which sum up the experiences of our poet. Before his consecration was performed the dance of frustration 'ஊனநடனம்' tasting one pleasure after another and like Faust not finding satisfaction anywhere: and after his dedication came the dance of progressive realisation, quickening or waning in response with his partner's absence or presence. This is contained in lines 378–379. The lyric "Anandatheetham" or "The Temple Lyric" (கோயிற்றிருப்பதிகம்) are fine examples of this Dance where the poet's frame from head to foot becomes one quivering heart, tremulous with the chimes of love's waltz. Betthoven's music, Dante's 'Divine Comedy', Plato's 'Dialogues' and Kalidasa's 'Shakuntala' fall under the same category of art.

Lastly occurs the Dance of bliss, where in the pose of Sakti the poet joins in the performance of the mystic Dance. In line 371, he alluded to this truth, that all God's lovers take part in His Grace. "அருள் செய் அன்பரும் நீயும்"

Stanza 100 contains a memorable analogy which reveals the relationship of the Lord to the world and

1. ... ... என்னை யின்னிதாய் ஆண்டு கொண்டவா
ஊனை நாடகம் ஆடு வித்தவா
உருகி நானுனைப் பருக வைத்தவா
ஞான நாடகம் ஆடு வித்தவா
நைய வையகத் துடைய விச்சையே (99)

the soul of man. Without a cause, the Lord moves the universe of matter and all therein. It is as marvellous as the growth of a tree without a seed. Equally so, He preserves and dissolves it. Likewise in as inexplicable a manner, "the Supreme lover made me His" (383). Even if the tree that man cared for and tended, proved poisonous, he will not destroy it; so also the Lord would not discard him even if he proved unworthy and unfaithful.

Praise, devotion, surrender, helplessness and humility mingle in unison in the last three stanzas as the chords of Love strike the. grand symphony. The poet calls on the Lord in endearing terms of distilled sweetness, in all the relationships in which he stood to the Lord.

My Father, 'My Sweet One'
My Joy, 'Blessedness of blest souls'
One among Thy devotees, I claim to taste
Thy Bliss, 'Gracious One'
Glory Bright, 'My Helper!'
Treasure to those in need,'
Wilt Thou leave me in this world
To pine away, my Sovereign Lord. (102)

The poet can no longer dwell at ease with his body in the world and eyes gazing and heart pondering on the "vision" of 'Ananda' or Joy. The poignancy of the brief interval of separation that intervenes between the final consummation is expressed in stanza 103[1]. The cry "call me to Thee, my Lord, To Thee" is different from the cry of anguish that he raises in

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1. ...பெய்கழற்கண் அன்பாயென் நாவிறைற்
பன்ன எம்பிரான் வருக என்னெனைப்
பாவ நாசநின் சீர்கள் பாடவே (103)

other poems as in 'நீத்தல் விண்ணப்பம்', where the pain of the world drives him to call on the Lord despairingly, but here it is the cry of a released soul for bliss ineffable: "Thou whose beauteous Feet I adore in love, my saviour of sins, call me to Thee - that I may sing of Thy Glory, call me to Thee, to Thee." What for? To dance the jubilent dance of bliss alluded to in line 380 – "ஞான நாடகம் ஆடுவித்தவா"

In the visible presence of the Lord, the cosmic Dancer, the soul of man breaks into a dance and the rasas of love and joy harmonise, as in the last stanza 104. Sublime music and poetic rhythm accompany the poet's rapturous dance, when finally in a grand crescendo of ecstasy, he touches the feet of Siva-Ananda who clasps his votary in Siva Jnana Bliss.

'Let me sing a song of praise to Thee
A melody of soulful and melting love.
Let me dance a dance of praise to Thee
Before Thy Joyous Form in Thillai's Hall.
Let me be one with Thee, in holiness meet
Freed from the burthen of mortal seat.
Let me arise from dreams of fleeting joy,
To seek Thy Bliss divine, Thou Radiance of
Truth."[1] 104

1, பாட வேண்டும்நான் போற்றி நின்னையே
பாடி நைந்துநைந் துருகி நெக்குநெக்
காட வேண்டும்நான் போற்றி அம்பலத்
தாடு நின்கழற் போது நாயினேன்
கூட வேண்டும்நான் போற்றி இப்புழுக்
கூடு நீக்கெனைப் போற்றி பொய்யெலாம்
வீட வேண்டும்நான் போற்றி வீடுதந்
தருளு போற்றிநின் மெய்யர் மெய்யனே (104)

What an alchemy it is that transmutes the dross of every day speech into the pure gold of poetry! What magic it is that can paint a picture on a thousand minds and set dumb chords vibrating in a thousand hearts! Such music is not accidentally wrought but it is inspired when it falls in cadences that seem so inevitable, so due to the rhythm and meaning working jointly.

*Conclusion*: How effectively and touchingly does Manikkavacagar unveil the secret recesses of the heart, the impalpable suggestions, the silent mutations, the mental labirynth of motives and pretexts. The artist sees closely the most sacred as well as the most oppro-prious shrines of the inner man and with wonder do we read *Tiruccadagam* or the *Sublime Ascent* where is traced the progress of the soul in ten marked stages from Earth to Heaven - The *Dawn of Truth* leads to the impartation of Divine knowledge, which leads to a revelation of the dying to sense and self and which hastens the surrendering of the self and on to the *Purification of the Soul*. The Jivan Mukta is halfway now in his ascent. His gaze is steadily fixed on to the Lord who grants him Grace and Love, and he purged not only in the body but also in the mind, of all objective stains. Then the soul craves for Divine compassion as love exceeds the limitations of the flesh and bodies forth in rapture to its fulfilled end. Like the three stages of the blossoming of a bud into a full flower, the last three cantos unfold the blossoming of Love into bliss - the picture of the ecstasies of the saints of God whose ripeness of Love and fidelity to Truth fit them to enter the Kingdom of Siva-Mukti and attain the blessedness of mystic union with Him.

Tiruccadagam occupies an unique place in Tiruvacagam. The hundred stanzas contain the quintessence of the poet's greatest experience at Tirupperunthurai when the God-Guru initiated him. After receiving the wondrous illumination, the poet must have sung this poem. So without any doubt, it is the embodiment of the teaching of the Guru, and in a number of places in Tiruvacagam, he alludes to the nature of the instruction, he received from his Guru, and to this crucial experience of his life. List to a few of the references to this great exent.

1, நானேயோ தவஞ்செய்தேன் சிவாயநம வெனப்பெற்றேன்
தேனாய்இன் னமுதமுமாய்த் தித்திக்குஞ் சிவபெருமான்
தானேவந் தெனதுள்ளம் புகுந்தடியேற் கருள்செய்தான்
ஊனாரும் உயிர்வாழ்க்கை யொறுத்தன்றே வெறுத்திடவே.
[திருவேசறவு. 555

2. இன்பம் பெருக்கி இருளகற்றி எஞ்ஞான்றும்
துன்பந் தொடர்வறுத்துச் சோதியாய் — அன்பமைத்துச்
சீரார் பெருந்துறையான் என்னுடைய சிந்தையே
ஊராகக் கொண்டான் உவந்து. [திருவெண்பா. 627

3, பேசும் பொருளுக் கிலக்கிதமாம் பேச்சிறந்த
மாசின் மணியின் மணிவார்த்தை — பேசிப்
பெருந்துறையே யென்று பிறப்பறுத்தேன் நல்ல
மருந்தினடி என்மனத்தே வைத்து. [பணடாய, 634

4. முத்திநெறி யறியாத மூர்க்கரொடு முயல்வேனைப்
பத்திநெறி யறிவித்துப் பழவினைகள் பாறும் வண்ணம்
சித்தமலம் அறுவித்துச் சிவமாக்கி எனையாண்ட
அத்தனெனக் கருளியவா றார்பெறுவார் அச்சோவே.
[அச்சோ, 650

The God-Guru manifested Himself on earth and illuminated him.

"சிவனவனி வந்தருளி
எந்தரமும் ஆட்கொண்டு தோட்கொண்ட நீற்றனாய்ச்
சிந்தனையை வந்துருக்கும் சீரார்பெருந் துறையான்"
(8. 177)

In order to appreciate the significance of the message conveyed in Tiruccadagam, let us review the poet's conversion as it is given in Tiruvathavurar Puranam.

Manikkavacagar was nearing the town of Tirupperunthurai on his way to purchase the horses for his royal Master. The atmosphere was filled with music. The royal Minister steps down from his horse and enters the scene, mute with wonder, girt with Siva's Grace, senses bound, his past life embalmed in happy insensibility and his soul surging with secret force. Then having been initiated into the mysteries of soul and God, by the Guru, he is called "Manikkavacaga" the poet of the sacred utterance. This is a proof to show that he must have sung "Tiruccadagam" then.

In these hundred stanzas, the poet conjures up the blissful state of Siva's devotee who had won his battle of life. There is the cognition of the True (மெய்யுணர்தல்) and the imparting of Divine Knowledge (அறிவுறுத்தல்). This is followed by a dying to sense and self (சுட்டறுத்தல்) and purification of the soul (ஆத்தும சுத்தி). The purified soul has no way of expressing his gratitude to the Giver of Grace, and plunges in a cry of "Other refuge have I none". An overwhelming sense of the divine compassion fills him, as he sees the saints of God moving on to the city of Siva and fear stunning and benumbing, grips him. Then come the stanzas on the mystic union of the saints and a supplication for consummation. On the peak of Jnana stands the Pilgrim of Eternity, the Lover of God, with an overpowering realisation of the True and False.

6. நீத்தல் விண்ணப்பம். *The Poet's Prayer.*

*Place:* Uttara Kosa Mangai.

*Quintessence:* Renunciation Heroic.

*Interpretation:*

(A) The poem is a prayer. In a mood of despondency, the poet sends a petition to the Lord of Tirupperunthurai not to leave him alone. It is both a supplication and Mock - Heroic. After a joyful period, the Guru and His disciples had taken their leave, and Manikkavacagar felt desolate and the world was too much with him[1]. The instruction of his Guru as depicted in 'Tiruccadagam' must be experienced intensely in his life. To assuage his grief at the separation of the Guru and His disciples, he goes to Uttara Kosa Mangai shrine and there fortifies his mind to withstand the burrs of the world. His armament to strike at the world is disclosed in this 'Anthathi' lyric consisting of fifty quatrains. The last word of a verse is repeated in the beginning of each following verse and forming a chain of closely woven thought.[2] It has a wonderful effect of a continuous melodious request, 'விட்டிடுதி கண்டாய்' interpreted as "Free me from bondage" "Forsake me not" or "Leave me not". His mental predicament is beautifully sketched in stanza 113. He is caught between two fires. The fire of the world rages on one side and the flame of Bliss on the other end, and he is scorched by both. Fear and dejection are the dominant 'bhavas' in this poem. The poet is young and yet a stranger in the realm of spirituality. The

1. Cf. Wordsworth's Sonnet. "The world is too much with us".
2. Vide pope's Tiruvasagam Page 85.

world tempts him with manifold delights and the fascination of the fair sex exerts a great spell on him, as his confessions reveal. Thus 'to be free from the fetters of the senses' is his constant refrain. Dangerous is the subtle hold of the senses: Gone is His Guru: Gone too are His companions! His mind is yet wayward though illumined. In this uneasy state of mind, the poet utters the stoic appeal "Leave me not." He makes a moving plea:–

To be free from frailty, Ignorance and Fear,
To be free from conflict which makes him suffer so much.

To be free from cares, sorrows, loneliness, despondency sensual attachment, wrong judgment and indiscrimination, infidelity and insincerity - all are but the natural susceptibilities of the flesh to err.

To be free to sing and adore, to serve the Master and his followers stead fastly, to thirst after Him and hunger for His love, love without pride, to be fervant without vanity - in short, to be liberated from all taints of humanity - to be near, for ever enjoying His strength and serenity, to attain the Feet of Siva - This is his prayer. Separation from the Lord is the cause of all these fears and sorrows and so he pleads that he may leave off the yoke of the body but not leave off his firm hold on Lord Siva.

The poet's magical power of expressing with the utmost poignancy, the spiritual weariness - '*மெலிகின்ற என்னை*' (*114*), '*கொம்பரில்லாக் கொடிபோல* ... ... ... ... ... *வெம்புகின்றேனை*' (*124*), '*நின் குறிப்பில விதுவிதுப்பேனை*' (*138*), the fever and the fret of life here where men sit and hear each other groan

'என்னை அப்பா அஞ்சல் என்பவரின்றி நின்றெய்த் தலைந் தேன்' (120), 'தனித்துணை நீ நிற்கயான் தருக்கித் தலையால் நடந்த வினைத்துணையேனை' and of conveying the frightened and menacing perplexities of the soul brought to bay 'இருந்தென்னை ஆண்டுகொள் விற்றுக்கொள் ஒற்றிவை என்னினல்லால் ... ... ... ... மருந்தினனேபிற விப்பிணிப் பட்டு மடங்கினர்க்கே' - all are admirably portrayed with a precise and inscrutable apprehension of the human soul and its needs.

(B) The beauty of thought and intensity of feeling can only be felt if the poem is taken as a whole.

105. "In mercy, Thou consecrated me. My Guru leave me not in this sinful world". We hear the voice of the Guru - "Why Fear? I am always with you and you are safe in this world". The poet replies 'சடையவனே தளர்ந்தேன்..............என்னைத் தாங்கிக் கொள்ளே' "I feel faint . . Wilt Thou not support me?"

The strain of his plea is given in the first section of the verse ending விடுதிகண்டாய் and the voice, the still small voice of the Master is heard after that. In reply to the silent admonition of the Guru, "Why Fear?' in each stanza the poet states his reasons, in the last two lines. Thus we see an exquisite picture of the poet pouring his plaintive strains before the tender Master who listens and comforts His crying votary.

106. My frailty for the charms of maidens, still persists. Leave me not! My place is with Thee: 'உள்ளேன் புறமல்லேன்'. Why did'st Thou not take me into Thy Grace, if only to see the sinner apart from Thee?

Free me from infidelity, Oh Lord of Uttara Kosa Mangai.

107. Rooted in carnal delights of the fair, I stand like a tree, thriving on the cool banks of the river. Leave me not in this sinful world. In Grace, should'st Thou not succour me? Far from being caressed by the springs of wordly love like the luxuriant trees fed by the river, the poet wants to be fed by the milk of Sakti or Grace of the Lord. Such implied suggestive similes and allusions enrich the poetry of his prayer.

108. Apart from Thy growing Grace, I thrive here. Free me, Oh Lord from ignorance. For art Thou not the Radiant light?

109. I fall a prey to the wiles of women. Free me from sensual ills. Ah! That I should have refused to be nursed by Thy Grace?

*'வழிநின்று நின்னருளா ரமுதூட்ட மறுத்தனனே'*

110. For denying Thy Grace, hate me not; *(என் மணியே வெறுத்தனை நீ...')* but free me from Thy disgust, my Gem, and from the bonds of sinful deeds. Should not the great bearwith the wrongs of small curs?

111. Thou who consecratedst a sinner, and then who hides Thy bliss leave me not in falsehood, Thou Healer of Sins!

112. That my sins be healed by Thy balmy Grace, I perspire. *'வேர்க்கின்ற என்னை விடுதிகண்டாய்'*. Desire and Fear rage a war within me. Leave me not in such conflict, Lord!

113. Behold the ant caught in between upon a brand burning at both ends! From the bewilderment that faces me, Free me, Victorious warrior with the trident.

Having been illuminated, the soul shuns the allurements of the world as unworthy pursuits but the dazzling glory of the splendour of God blinds him. Poised midway between the world and the Lord, the soul is wrapt in fear and brought to a standstill like the ant which faces the burning ends on either side of the rod. Here we see the poet's delight in homely analogies and the art of evoking rich visions by a simple simile as stated above. 'இருதலைக் கொள்ளியின் உள்ளெறும் பொத்து நினைப்பிரிந்த விரிதலையேனை விடுதி கண்டாய்'. The simile is fraught with the utter hopelessness and anguishing pangs of the poet and such phrases, allusions and words express the accent of high beauty, worth and power, that bow our hearts in holy prayer. Vide stanzas 117, 122, and 130.

114. That I should waste my days after having sought Thy shelter, Oh, I pine at this futility, Lord: Leave me not alone, Thou destroyer of Foes!

115. Deceived by my foes, the senses, I go astray. Leave me not magnanimous Guide and Honey of my soul.

116. I forsook Thee for the pleasures of the world. Yet leave me not in sorrow for my disloyalty - Great ocean that can quench my thirst. 'உண்ணுந் தெண்ணீரமுதப் பெருங்கடலே'.

117. I know not how to quaff from Thy sea of Grace. As the dog that laps the waters of the lake and is still not quenched, so too, leave me not thirsting for Thy Grace - Thou who art the flood of bliss (என்மது வெள்ளமே).

As the poet catalogues his grievances and imperfections, he finds each time, a stimulating panacea for each illness, in the Divine Healer who is also the Lord of perfection. If he thirsts, as in the above stanza, the Lord will offer him the drink divine; if he is distressed, the Lord shall inject him with happiness and cure his affection as in the following stanza:– 'துன்பத்தினின்றும் விள்ளக்கிலேனை ... அருளாய் கனியாத கனியெனக்கே' Thus the beauty of his appeal is enhanced by the sublimity of the response. The Lord and Man are together strumming the veena. A soul - enthralling Duet. We hear a mighty music echoing far and near. Their relationship is focussed by the lens of poesy.

118. Though I sip the waters of Grace, do I choke with, leave me not to feel thirsty in the midst of surrounding waters, for I know not the means of escape from such affliction - Give me that ecstacy of Joy that has not been mine so far.

119. I saw Thee joyfully and yet did not commune with Thee - 'கண்டுங் கலந்தருள வெளிவந்திலேனை' Leave me not, Father accessible and Guru mine.

120. Thou flash of lightning! My flame of Truth. When chilling fear possesses me and no one to say 'Fear not, my child' - Thou leave me not, Thou, who art like my Father, my Mother and my peerless pearl.

121. Leave me not alone with those that spurn Thee - Oh, Grace in perfect union with Thy true Saints! Light of Thy devotees and darkness of the wicked! Thou refuge of my soul. 'பெருமானே தமியேன் புக விடமே.'

122. An inexperienced guest am I in the house of the Lord. I pledge Thee my absolute fidelity. Leave me not Oh, Healer of the ills of births.

123. Thy fire of Grace burns up the dark woods of my sins. Come as a heroic warrior of old when Thou killed 'Kayasuran' elephant and frightened Uma and free me from the manacle of birth, and leave me not.

124. Like a creeper trailing with no support, I wither away. Leave me not to tremble so, Lord absolute and source of life! 'வெம்புகின்றேனை விடுதி கண்டாய்'.

125. My Father! Leave me not to feel distressed like the tender plant trampled under the feet of warring elephants. Thou, who art sweetness and light that thrills my soul.

126. Transcendent Lord! Friend of those who love Thee. Leave me not alone.

127. In this life, I did many wrongs and am a bankrupt in Thy love. Leave not this worthless one. Life of my Life. My Indwelling One. Once having gained serenity from Thee, now if you leave me, I shall perish. 'என்வாழ் முதலே...விடிலோ கெடுவேன்' is full of pathos.

128. Under the sway of the senses that shut out my approaches to Thee as the ants that swarm round the ghee pot, leave me not, that I lose my power of discrimination.

129. Mighty One, who never forsakes His loved ones! Leave me not to be gnawed by the attractions of the world like the worm amidst ants.

130. The grace of the Lord is shown in a fine image[1]. He who upheld the Ganges in his locks and who saved the moon from waning, out of his boundless mercy, will He not protect me? The utter helplessness is conveyed by the smile. "When the waters recede, the little fishes faint, halfdead, on the shore so bereft of Thee, I quake and faint."

131. Bewitched by the charms of women, wilt Thou not free me? Purify me once more, my spotless pearl, who gave me a place midst pious saints.

132. I swerved from the right path and felt troubled. Shrine of my heart. Leave me not alone, Thou, who saved the Gods from trouble.[2]

133. Churned like curdled milk, I swing to and fro under the sway of the senses. Leave me not to whirl in sins, victorious Father.

134. Bewildered in the sensations' delights, perplexed sore, I thrive here. Leave me not Essence pure.

The poet's restlessness is conveyed by the words மத்துறு, வித்துறு, கொத்துறு, தத்துறு, conjuring a peculiar atmosphere of confusion.

135. Thou, who pervadest every object, leave me not.

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1. The poet who was adept and well versed in the ancient puranas draws freely from these sources to enrich his poetry just as Milton drew freely from the Bible. The many stories current in the Literature of the day regarding the gracious acts of Lord Siva to Gods and mortals in their dire needs are found in the 63 sports of Siva.

2. Reference to Lord Siva taking the poison that arose from the sea of Milk, as ambrosia was churned and thus saving Vishnu and other Gods.

136. I was lost in the mesh of enjoyments. Except to the true saints in Thy service, Thou, who art hard to attain, Leave me not.

137 & 138. These stanzas stand out as gems of thought and expression. They contain the purpose of his petition, to free himself from all vain deluding joys of the world and not to leave him alone entirely, in his sojourn in the world of sin.

The rhyme scheme, repetition of words like குதுகுது, விதுவிது, மதுமது, euphony of sounds, carry the spirit of bubbling merriment and glee at the prospect of the poet biding by the will of God: "நின் குறிப்பில் விதுவிதுப் பேனை".

137. 'My Own Father'. Drunk with the wine of Thy Grace. Leave me not to rejoice in religious excess and conceit. Consecrate me once again to Thy humble service and free me from waywardness.

138. Satiated by selfish pleasures, I hasten to know Thy will. When will Thou come and fill me with Thy sweetness as the ripe juice of the plantain fruits? Ah, Leave me not.

139. Thou who willeth that I should be one with Thy dear saints leave me not in deire and deceit, for I dread the deadly poison of senses five.

140. I burn with sorrow in the hot bed of desires. Leave me not but come with Thy cooling, bracing grace.

141. Like jutting rocks that butt, my sinful deeds press upon me. Leave me not comfortless.

142. Unable to cross the woods where I exhale the feminine airs, Leave me not in weakness. Sole

Refuge who chases my loneliness. Thou who transcends attachment.

'தொடர் வரியாய் தமியேன் தனிநீக்குந் தனித்துணையே.'

143. In this stanza, there is another gem of matchless lustre. An outcry to break away from the throes of the flesh. "When Thou wert my supreme Helper, why did I arrogantly seek the guide of my false senses? Leave me not to gloat in "Egoism". Source of my Life! Strength of my soul! Not a second longer can I bear the pain of mortality.[1]

144. Leave me not to be ensnared in the net of lust. Free me from the pangs of sensuality.

145. Leave me not, my goal of bliss, to be tortured in the sea where crocodiles roam (carnal delights). I cannot endure this sickly, filthy den of my body.

146. Leave me not to my fate in this birth, but lead me through the path of wisdom to Thy Feet.

147. No fitting return can I offer Thee, if Thou wilt not leave me, Thou brightness of joy. Thou art the Alpha and Omega of Thy faithful saints.

148. Dissolved in carnal fire, I melt: Leave me not. Though unworthy, join me to Thy saints. Thee will I sing.

149. In the poet's psychology is recorded a change of bhava. He turns aside from beseeching the presence

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1. தனித்துணை நீநிற்க யான்தருக் கித்தலை யால்நடந்த
வினைத்துணை யேனை விடுதிகண் டாய்வினை யேனுடைய
மனத்துணை யேயென்றன் வாழ்முத லேயெனக் கெய்ப்பில்
[வைப்பே
இனைத்துணை யேனும் பொறேன்துய ராக்கையின் திண்வலையே

of the Lord and faces desolation - an exhaustion after a ceaseless request. The weariness is felt in the poem "I sing not; I lose not; I search not; I pant not;" He lies listless and sings pathetically:-

149. Leave me not - I cannot sing Thy praises.
This body, I do not abandon:
In wondrous love, I do not pant nor seek Thee;
Where has He gone? Who saw Him? I ask not.
I pine here in despair, listlessly.
'சிவன் எவ்விடத்தான்? எவர் கண்டனர்!
என்றோ டிற்றிலனே.'

150. The rest of the stanzas in this poem is in the form of "Nindastuti" (நிந்தாஸ் துதி) where the poet addressed the Lord as a "mad man" and in other contemptuous terms. Truly these epithets veil the praiseworthy yet hidden nature of the Lord and it has been a favourite device among the great mystic poets such as the Alvars.

151. When Thy service failed to give me joy, I reviled Thee.

I am sleepless with grief: Leave me not. Each attribute and epithet is associated with one of the Lord's gracious acts to His devotees.

152. I shall loudly trumpet my serfdom to Thee, so that the world may laugh at Thee for forsaking Thy faithful.

153. This is a striking example of mock-praise. The choise of words suggests disparagement born out of great love.

'சிரிப்பிப்பன்...
விரிப்பிப்பன்...
உரிப்பிச்சன் தோலுடைப் பிச்சன் நஞ்சுண் பிச்சன் ஊர்ச்
[சுடுகாட்
டெரிப்பிச்சன் என்னையும் ஆளுடைப் பிச்சனென்
[றேசுவனே'

"I'll make them smile, unfolding faults and service to
the Lord.
Ho, Thou hast forsaken me; but if Thou leave, I shall
abuse Thee sore?
"Madman, clad in elephant's skin, madman with hide
for his garb?
Madman that ate the poison: madman of the burning
ground fire;
Madman that chose even me for his own".[1]

Of course, 'madman' He is, and all his followers become mad also, and are they not called so by the world? Professor Drammond in his address on the "Eccentricity of Religion", remarked that Christ suffered such indignity because the charge was that "He was beside himself". God and the world occupy different centres and these in the world's centre call God and those in Him eccentric or mad.

154. The last stanza replaces these tumultuous passions, by the harmony of Peace, Perfect Peace. Grief and dismay at the painful separation from his Guru - Lord, die down and he is encompassed by a wonderful flow of love.

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1. Vide Pope's Tiruvasagam: Page 101.
Vide Siddhanta Deepika: Vol. V Page 70 Article on "Sri Sundara Murti Nayanar - some misapprehensions removed by the Editor.

"Whether I adore Thee or revile Thee
I crave Thy forgiveness for my sins which I rue.
Leave me not, Oh Thou who took mercy on the Gods and drank the poison in order to save Them.

How much more do I stand in need of Thy loving mercy?"[1]

Thus Manikkavacagar interprets in his poetry humanity's groans and travails after their proper meanings. His poetry becomes the "resonance of greatness of soul"

*Conclusion:* "The Sublime Cents" and "The poet's Prayer" should be taken as one unit of experience. Tiruvacagam opens with the four hymns of adoration forming a beauteous garland of praise to the poet's beloved. Then follows this second section of the poem, where the poet takes us quietly through the thorns of his experiences, witnessing huge affliction and fills us with an undying thirst for "The True, The Noble and The Fair". The masterly initiation of the poet into the service of God by the Sage under the Kuruntha tree at Tirupperunthurai, is expounded in wondrous poetry. In 'Tiruccadagam' and the "Prayer - Leave me not", we see a conjuration apt and marvellous of something we have all felt and lived through. The vision evoked is so puissant that it can darken all the air about us with sombre memory. How longingly does the poet sing of his love for the Infinite and of his dissatisfaction with the Finite. Browning's "Last Ride Together", depicts the lover riding with the finite and feeling an oppressive

1. ஏசினும் யானுன்னை யேத்தினும் என் பிழைக்கே குழைந்து
வேசறுவேனை விடுதிகண்டாய் (*154*).

burden. So it has ever been - the finite, the sense given, the phenomenal, the mass of sensations pass away. To apprehend the depth and height of the poetic incantation underlying "Tiruccadagam" and "Leave me not - Prayer", we must join heart and soul with the poet's desire for the illimitable, infinite and eternal, with which each lyric is saturated.

When the Guru and his followers left him, the poet sang these two psalms. He realised that the lonely journey to God was trackless; but so was the bird's; he comes through purgatory blind with the faith that God will guide him as he guides the birds of the air. Manikkavacagar is neither "Paracelsus who represents the intellectual alone, nor Aprile who embodies the aesthetic in life but unites the two dissevered halves".[1]

The hyblean murmurs of pure poetry vibrated within and without him till they crystallised with a grand chorus of elevated thoughts and lofty feelings. Tiruccadagam is a linked lay of truth, a testament of love and the "Prayer - Psalm" is the poet's yearning, set in haunting melody, to dwell with God.

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## E

## TIRU EMPAVAI - TIRUTTHASANGAM.

*Lyrical Poetry in Tiruvacagam.*

The odes from திருவெம்பாவை to திருத்தசாங்கம் form a unit of conception and technique. The poet relates his experiences through the devices of children's games and recreations. The technique of adopting folk

1. Vide; Mysticism and poetry by Brockington.

song lore, devices of folk games and sending messages through the bee, kuyil, parrot etc., is noteworthy in the cantos that follow.

The fundamental quality of poetic style in these odes is its ease, smoothness and even flow as of gliding water. The modulations of the verse, changes of melody and rhythm are infinitely various. We see the unit of the recurring feature, as in the poem, 'Tiruk Kotthumbi' திருக்கோத்தும்பி [1] that repeats itself. There is a unit within a unit; the line is a unit and its recurrence as a unit is made *clearer* to the ear by rhyme. The stanza is a unit and so is the canto forming the unit of the whole poem. The rhythmic recurrence of each stanza produces the effect of all rhythm viz. the facilitating and carrying forward of attention.[2]

Thus words are made into a "continuous texture revealing their concealed energies and delicate suggestions - the continuous sound of language is its rhythm - the rhythm of language can symbolise as nothing else can, the emotional comment with which mind accompanies its experience.

Language in poetry is a transmission of energy rather than of substance. It is a stimulus for our minds - the whole purpose of a poet's technique is to

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1. திருக்கோத்தும்பி 219
2. கேட்டாயோ தோழி கிறிசெய்த வாறொருவன்
   தீட்டார் மதில்புடைசூழ் தென்னன் பெருந்துறையான்
   காட்டா தனவெல்லாங் காட்டிச் சிவங்காட்டித்
   தாட்டா மரைகாட்டித் தன்கருணைத் தேன்காட்டி
   நாட்டார் நகைசெய்ய நாமேலை வீடெய்த
   ஆள்தான்கொண் டாண்டவா பாடுதுங்கா ணம்மானாய்.

   திருவம்மானை - 6

make a moment of his experience come to life in other minds than his."[1]

A stanza may be quoted in illustration:—

தினைத்தனை யுள்ளதோர் பூவினில்தே னுண்ணாதே
நினைத்தொறும் காண்டொறும் பேசுந்தொறும் எப்போதும்
அனைத்தெலும் புண்ணெக ஆனந்தத் தேன்சொரியும்
குனிப்புடை யானுக்கே சென்றூதாய் கோத்தும்பீ, (217)

"O, humming bee! don't you ever more suck blossoms, which yield you but a trifling quantity of honey. Blow you, hereafter at the feet of the Great Dancer, since thought, sight or speech about Him, showers the honey of bliss on His votaries by thrilling their frame to the very bones."

In this section of lyrical poetry, the diction is characterised by dignity and lucidity and in pathos the poet stands unrivalled. To take another example:

ஊழி முதற்சிந்தாத நன்மணி வந்தென் பிறவித்
தாழைப் பறித்த வாதோ ணோக்க மாடாமோ (327)

"The unfading Gem of all aeons has unfettered me once for all, from the clutches of the "fleshy nook."

'Shall we not dance in joyous glee?'

What is uppermost in his mind is recounted in pleasing literary form, embodying his thoughts on the Lord, his ideas on the destiny of man and his mental experiences.

Having sung 'நீத்தல் விண்ணப்பம்' the poet awaits the answer of the Lord. The response to the cry of "Leave me not," 'விட்டுதி கண்டாய்' is given in the following twelve cantos. The Lord unfolds the truth

1. The Theory of poetry by Lascellas Abercrombie

of His nearness to His devotees, His presence in the world where cares abound. He is in the world and in the soul of man, and mingles in the thoughts of man.

ஊனாய் உயிராய் உணர்வாய் என்னுட் கலந்து
.... .... ... .... ... அளவிறந்த பல்லுயிர்க்கும்
கோனாகி நின்றவா கூறுதுங்காண் அம்மானாய் (190)

To a soul that has tasted the wondrous love of God and learnt the value of detachment, the world is a training ground to secure release and enjoy bliss infinite. "This world is neither a blot nor a blank - it means intensely and means well."[1] "The Lord had bidden the poet abide his time and go to Thillai."[2] His missions, the poet came to understand, were to sing the songs of adoration and lore and save distressed souls from sinful deeds. தன்புகழே பன்னிப் பணிந்திறைஞ்சப் பாவங்கள் பற்றறுப்பான் (335). Manikkavacagar's illimitable love induces him to inspire every sentient being with enthusiastic faith in God. So he invokes the bee, the parrot, and the young maidens to join with him to sing the Grace of Siva: Listen to his song.

It is a prophetic call for all of us who hurry through the fevered dale of life, to hear his sweet song of hope, his song of eternal bliss and gain the secret of happiness by retracing our steps from the thorny path to the kingdom of Siva - Mukthi. It is a happy song of release - release from the cares of the world, its pain, and delusions and the song of the soul in advaithic union with the Lord. In these twelve cantos, noted for their poetic excellencies, the poet pays greatest attention to the feeling side of man. The wandering poet conveys in these poems, expressions through sense of

1. Browning
2. கீர்த்தித் திருவகவல் *127 - 128.*

something beyond sense. He wants to communicate the great joy of a man who is in tune with the infinite.

Some of the happiest and finest passages of pure poetry are found in these lyrics and they are generally the most well known poems in Tiruvacagam, eg. Tiru Ammanai, Tirut Tellenam, and Ode to Kuyil. In these poems, Manikkavacagar's poetry seems to go up in to the air and burst like a rocket. The beauty of this group of poems lay not in the moral virtues but in an intuition which was the substance of his soul, of the unique value of Love.[1] "Whatever in the world has any worth is an expression of Love. Love sometimes talks. Love talking musically is poetry."[2] In the melodious address to the sweet singing bird, Kuyil, in the songs of the innocent children in their play, the poet has chosen to exhibit the beauty of his conception of intense Love to the Lord with such grace and sweetness.

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## 9. திருவெம்பாவை: *Tiru Empavai:*

*Place:* Tiru Annamalai.

*Quintessence:* In wondrous Praise of Sakti.

The Hymn opens with the young maids calling out to their friends inside the house to join them in their praises to their Lord, who is beginingless and the end of all, a light of splendour. It is appropriate that in

1. Vide A. C. Branley's Oxford Lecture on Shelley's view of Poetry.
2. உருகிப் பெருகி உளங்குளிர முகந்துகொண்டு
பருகற் கினிய பரங்கருணைத் தடங்கடலை
மருவித் திகழ்தென்னன் வார்கடலை நினைந்தடியோம்
திருவைப் பரவிநாம் தெள்ளேணங் கொட்டாமோ (249)

this lyric, the Lord should be extolled as a resplendent light - Paranjothi as it is composed in Thiruvannamalai, where the manifested form of Siva is Light (Agni) - the light that purges one of all darkness.

In the second stanza (156) the children outside argue with their friends inside, that there should be no spiritual lethargy among the faithful devotees of the Lord. "*ஈசனார்க் கன்பார்யாம்*". The procession moves on and at another door, they playfully mock at a friend who would speak glowingly of her Lord and yet who was late in opening the door to join them. The maiden inside retorts that she is only a novice and that mature devotees should not take amiss her weakness (Ld. 10, 11) to which they reply "Will not those pure of heart sing of our Lord?"-

*சித்தம் அழகியார் பாடாரோ நம்சிவனை* (*157*)

In stanza 158, the girl inside wanted to know whether all the others had joined them to which, the maids outside bade her come and do the counting herself, they were busy praising Him who was dear to them (11.15) who though unknownable even to Gods (11.19) had granted them His Grace and loved them magnanimously, 159.

In stanza 160, the young maidens outside remind their friend of her promise to rise early and awake them. But now even when they have come to take her, she was slow and indifferent to join their choir. Stanza 161, depicts one who was so sensitive in her love to the Lord but who strangely enough was unmoved even when she heard them adoring Him in the most endearing terms. A happy picture of the dawn is given in stanza 162-

the songs of birds and cocks, and conch shells sounding at dawn as the light of God's grace spreads everywhere.

Stanza 163 is a paean of love - the damsels imagine themselves as the sweet heart of their Lord's lovers, and pray to Him who is both the wisdom of the ages and the wonder of recent revelations, to grant them this boon. The next stanza is an address to the temple vestals, to tell them more of their beloved. ' His place? His name? His kith and kin - who? '

*ஏதவனூர்? ஏதவன்பேர்? யார்உற்றார்? யார்அயலார்*
*ஏதவனைப் பாடும் பரிசு? ஏலோரெம் பாவாய்* (164)

Then follows the stanza where the maidens dip into the pond singing and sporting gaily in the fullness of their love.

In stanza 166 while disporting thus, they raise their voices to adore the Lord who sports in Thillai's Hall granting grace on earth. They pray to Him to grant them the bliss everlasting.

In stanza 167 we have a fine allegory. The floating lily and the lotus flowers appear to them as their Lord and Sakti. The trailing bands of swans are like the garland round his neck, the conchshell, is the bracelet adorning the arms of Sakti, and the vibrant music, as the serpent twining round the Lord; those dip in to bathe are the devotees who enjoy the grace of the Lord, who are cleansed of the ' three fold malas '. Thus they imagine as they joyfully plunge inside the lake. Their joy breaks into a jubilant dance of Sakti whose glory they sing.

' Sing ye the feet of Her who armlet wears,
Who rears us as Her Children! (168.56)

Stanza 169 explains the state of a maid who out of the fullness of her love, has given her life wholly and entirely to the Lord. Who is this peerless, wise One who can conquer her thus?[1] It is interesting to note that Dr. Pope interprets this stanza as referring to the "Lady of Karaikkal"[2], by reading "கால்" *Kal* as a play on the word 'Karaikkal.' But I am inclined to think that this stanza depicts the poet himself - a graphic picture of himself during the period when he sang the "Leave me not" lyric. So great was his intoxication that those who looked on him wanted to know the Author, who was responsible for such rapturous love. This passage reminds us strongly of a fine stanza in Tiruvaimoli[3] 7. 2: where the mother paints the picture of her daughter who has given her heart to the Lord of Tiruvarangam.

The poet resorts to an allegory of the cloud to explain the function of Grace (Sakti); like the cumulus, that draws its water from the sea and condenses in showers of rain, amidst thunder and lightning, so also the Sakti (Grace) arises with lightning flashes of her beauty and the sound of her cymbals sourding like thunder and the rainbow reminding of her eyebrows, she mindful of those who love the Lord whose side she never quits, sends showers of grace to them. The young girls wrapt in the over-powering emotion imagine

1. ஆரொருவர் இவ்வண்ணம் ஆட்கொள்ளும் வித்தகர்தாள் (169)

2. Dr. Pope's Tiruvasagam. Page. 3

3. கங்குலும் பகலும் கண்துயி லறியாள்
கண்ணநீர் கைகளால் இறைக்கும்
சங்கு சக்கரங்க ளென்று கைகூப்பும்
தாமரைக் கண்ணென்றே தளரும்
எங்ஙனே தரிக்கேன் உன்னைவிட்டு (திருவாய்மொழி 7. 72)

that even the Gods do not enjoy such bliss as they do, when they sing of their beloved who had cared for them and made their hearts his abode and granted them His Grace.[1] The Lord is frequently alluded to as Joti or brilliance. "The stars pale; Darkness recedes at the approach of the Sun of Glory."

In beauty of thought and expression, stanza 173 is unrivalled as the gem of price-less lustre in Tiruvacagam. It is the prayer of refuge. They vow to serve none but the truly loved devotees of their Lord. The poet adopts the technique of "Ahatturai" (Erotic) form.

> Thee - the refuge of Thy own children......
> Grant us the boon of serving Thy lovers only
> Loving only them and seeing joy in nought
> else. 173.

The last stanza ends on the melody of Praise. In complete self-surrender they contemplate on the supreme Lord's transcendent form and on His loving grace, surpassing all understanding.

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## INTERPRETATION OF TIRU EMPAVAI.

The poet uses symbols and practices prevalent in his time to convey his thoughts and feelings on one of the most entrancing manifestations of Grace. He had to reveal in poetry, the profundity of his great vision.

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1. ......;...........தேவர்கள் பால்
எங்கும் இலாததோர் இன்பம்நம் பாலதா
..................நந்தம்மைக் கோதாட்டி
இங்குநம் இல்லங்கள் தோறும் எழுந்தருளிச்
செங்கமலப் பொற்பாதம் தந்தருளும் சேவகனை (171)

A new wine would have burst the old bottles. Like Blake he had to speak the meaning of eternity in the language of time[1] consistent with the religious practices of his day.

Many are the mystical interpretations[2] given of this poem. That it is a lyric in praise of Sakti is clear from the intent of the maiden's songs. Without the mediation of grace, God can never enter into any direct or personal relationship with the universe. In India, the month of December is the symbol of the awakening of the Universe from its slumber of involution and marks the dawn of a new phase in the process of evolution. The Siddhanta theory is that it is through Sakti, the counter part of Siva, His Grace, that the Supreme evolves all things and life fulfils its destiny.

Generally this hymn is taken as an impassioned call to the maidens who symbolise the human soul, slumbering in a stupor of darkness, to rise before dawn in December which marks the begining of activity in nature, that they may bathe in the refreshing waters of life and grace and be cleansed of the impurity of ignorance (168).

Vidwan Sabapathy Mudaliyar in his edition of Tiruvacagam in 1871 and Srila Sri Siva Arunagiri Mudaliyar in his edition of Tiruvacagam and Tirukkovai in 1927,[2] stress the idea of the operations of the nine Saktis, in their interpretation of Tiru Empavai. Each Sakti causes the other to move, and the Nava Saktis– Ambikai, Kanagambikai, Gowri, Ganga, Uma, Parasakti,

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1. Vide Middleton on 'Blake'

2. Vide திருவாசகம் மூலமும் பல ஆராய்ச்சி அகராதிகளும்: சைவ சித்தாந்த மகாசமாஜம் page 141. திருவெம்பாவைக் கருத்து: மகாவித்வான் காஞ்சீபுரம் சபாபதி முதலியார்.

Adi Sakti, Gnanasakti and Kriyasakti–are the principles of evolution. They move in the Suddha Maya and one by one, they cause the various parts of the universe to move, by the action of their Grace on them. This is no doubt an ingenious interpretation in line with the philosophic import of Saiva Siddhanta, but much of the spontaneous poetry gets cloudy and laborious under the weight of this philosophical approach.

We shall approach this lyric as an example of fine poetry. Nestled on all sides by towering hills and quiet dales, Tiruvannamalai's exhilarating air invigorates the young particularly, and it is no wonder that both the cantos sung in this sanctuary, noted for its music resounding from its rocky hills[1] should breathe the bewitching vigour and exuberance of young children at play. The poet at this stage of his progress, was dejected and heart sore as he was left alone. The Guru and His followers had gone and was on his long and arduous way to Thillai. Passing Tiruvannamalai, in the month of December, he must have heard and seen the children, going from house to house singing, and together wending their way to take a bath in the tank.

Vide Blake: When the voices of children are heard on the green
And laughing is heard on the hill
My heart is at rest within my breast
And everything else is still.

Viewing it in this light, I am inclined to interpret this poem as unfolding the longing of the poet to enjoy the bliss divine along with the saints of God. Those

1. திருவாசகம் — குறிப்புரையும் விஷயசூசனமும் page 84
Vide St. Sambandar 'முந்தி யெழுந்த முழவினோசை முதுகல் வரைகண் மேல 69-7

maidens who stand outside, singing the glory of the Lord in strains of unpremeditated spontaneity are the holy saints of the Lord and the poet is the maid inside. They call on him to join their band: "ஈசனார்க் கன்பார் யாம்" – we are the loved ones of the Lord. When they chide him, that he who was so exultant in his adoration of the Lord and who had expressed his love in the sweetest terms -- தித்திக்கப்பேசுவாய் [1] – this may refer to the poet's gift of sweet utterance as testified in Tiruvacagam – he should be found lethargic. We can almost hear the languid sighs of the poet from inside, telling them that he is still a novice whereas they who call him are advanced saints. The poet had always bewailed that he was left behind because of his immaturity whereas all the other ripe saints had followed their turn and gone to Siva Nagar (2. 130-134). Now he imagines that finding him so lonely, they were coming to take him – the Lord out of his bounteous Grace, and we must remember this lyric is a salutation to the Siva Sakti sent by his followers, so that the poet can revive his happy memories of Tirup Perunthurai, when he and they – ஈசனார்க் கன்பார்யாம் – sported in adoration of the Lord. In the first nine stanzas the poet's soul is addressed to in different, appropriate forms, in accordance with the stage of the progress of his inner life. In this reminiscential mood, we can find the poet making a number of references to his experiences; as for instance in stanza 161, the devotees allude to his exalted state of love, during the time he was consecrated at Tirup Perunthurai:

1. தித்திக்கப் பேசுவாய் வந்துன் கடைதிறவாய்
பத்துடையீர் ஈசன் பழவடியீர் பாங்குடையீர்
புத்தடியோம் புன்மைதீர்த்தாட் கொண்டாற் பொல்லாதோ
(157)

சின்னங்கள் கேட்பச் சிவனென்றே வாய்திறப்பாய்
தென்னாஎன்னா முன்னந் தீசேர் மெழுகொப்பாய்

This was in short contrast with his present state of spiritual stupor. "வன்னெஞ்சப் பேதையர்போல் வாளாக் கிடத்தியாய்" after singing his "leave us not" song he had sunk in the slumber of weariness; the favoured sons of God go to his door and recall all the promises he had made and his super sensitive sensations of overwhelming love for his Master, and his promise to sing of Him and Him only.

Finally, they all join and in a tuneful procession, mend their way to the tank and purify themselves, in the waters of Grace, and offer their salutations to God.

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## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TIRU EMPAVAI WITH ANDAL'S TIRUPPAVAI.

Andal was the adopted daughter of Sri Periyalvar, the poet of Srivilliputtur, who was a contemporary of Nedumaran of the seventh century - the well known Pandian King of the age of St. Sambandar. Andal is also known by the name of Sudik Kodutta Nachyar. Her well known composition "Tirup Pavai", and our poet's "Tiru Empavai" bear close resemblances. (Vide Tiruppavai by Sudik Kodutta Nachyar.) (St. Andal by M. B. Srinivasa Aiyangar M. A.)

Both the poems are written in the same metre "Kocchagak Kalippa" (vide Tolkappiam 154). Both call on the maidens to rise before dawn in the month of December which marks the begining of activity in nature, that they may bathe in the cool pond where flows the clear waters of life and grace.

In order to appreciate the close similarity of the two poems in the general technique and substance, we shall attempt to give a brief resume of St. Andal's Tiruppavai.

The maids arise to go for an early morning bath in Jumna in December. "Let us perform a vow to Lord Sri Krishna and win His love and grace and enjoy His bliss. What should we do when we observe a vow to him? – Sing His Praises, meditate on his name, for He is our Refugee. Let us perform devotional service and gain the knowledege of our dependence on Him" (stanzas 3-9).

Pastoral landscapes convey to the Gopis, the idyllic charms of their Lord. Thus they join, uniting all true devotees so that they bring their special vow to a successful fruition, - the vow consisting in holding communion with the Lord.

They approach the palace of Nanda Gopa and request the door keeper to let them in and then they address Sri Lakshmi to teach them intense love and wisdom to understand the Lord. In stanza 19, they beseech Sri Krishna to rise up and save them. Then follow allusions to the Lord's granting favours to his devotees, who craved his refugee. In stanza 29, the climax of the appeal is reached when these votaries sing thus: "We came to Thee to request you to accept our life long service. We cling to Thee, for ever, in the births to come, exercising our devotional service in the form of singing glory of Thee. Separation from Thee is impossible". They prostrate before Lord Krishna. They obtain the boon of eternal companionship with Him in

the due performance of their devotional service although to the ordinary world, it appeared they approached the almighty with a request to favour them with a Muraja instrument as a token of His Grace and reward.

Let us quote a few examples from both the poems, to bring out the necessary points of comparison.

Tiru Empavai (A): "போற்றியா மார்கழிநீ ராடேலோ
ரெம்பாவாய்"

Tirup Pavai (B): "மார்கழித் திங்கள் மதிநிறைந்த
நன்னாளால்
நீராடப் போதுவீர் போதுமினோ
நேரிழையீர்."

In both the lyrics, the maidens outside rebuke the maid inside for her indifference and addiction to sleep.

(A) "அரும்பெருஞ் சோதியை யாம்பாடக் கேட்டேயும்
வாட்டடங்கண்
மாதே வளருதியோ."

(B) "....................நாயகப் பெண்பிள்ளாய்
கேசவனைப் பாடவும்நீ கேட்டே கிடத்தியாய்"

The melodies of conch shells, crowing of the cocks, and music of the birds of the air drive away the shades of darkness.

(A) "கோழி சிலம்பச் சிலம்புங் குருகெங்கும்
ஏழில் இயம்ப இயம்பும் வெண்சங்கெங்கும்"

(B) "புள்ளுஞ் சிலம்பினகாண் புள்ளரையன்
[கோயிலிலே
வெள்ளை விளிசங்கின் பேரரவங் கேட்டிலையோ"

In the fervour of extolling the splendour of their respective Lords, in the sincerity of their conception and spontaneity of their expression and above all, in the beauty of poetic diction and depths of their philosophic purport, both these lyrics make a powerful appeal.

(A) "கேழில் பரஞ்சோதி கேழில் பரங்கருணை
கேழில் விழுப்பொருள்கள் பாடினோம் கேட்டிலை
வாழி யீதென்ன உறக்கமோ வாய்திறவாய்"[யோ

(B) "மனத்துக் கினியானைப் பாடவும்நீ வாய்திறவாய்
இனித்தா னெழுந்திரா யீதென்ன பேருறக்கம்"

Met with all the seeming similarity in form, diction and feeling, there is the vital difference between the two methods of approach.

"Tirup Pavai" is said to contain the essence of Upanishads which speak of those buried in the cycle of samsara, as being awakened by the Lord by His visions such as was given to the Alvars with this one difference that in the case of Andal, she herself approached and awakened the Lord to listen to her grievances in thirty stanzas. The keynote of Visishtadvaita Philosophy as expounded by Sri. Ramanujacharya and the Alvars is struck by St. Andal in "Tiruppavai" (Vide stanza 29 already quoted).

In Tiru Empavai, Manikkavacagar gloats in the grace of God, relishing with exceeding joy of the company of God's loved devotees (stanzas 163-170). Siva Gnana Botham, Sutra XII echoes the same sentiments: Let the Jivatma after washing off its mala which separates it from the strong "Lotus Feet of the Lord and mixing in the society of the Bhaktas whose

souls abound with Love, contemplate their forms as His Form."

Finally in stanza 173 an adoration to the Lord[1] follows and the poet's love for the Flowery Feet is visualised in the most exquisite lines of poetry. In the 1st two lines, he extols the transcendency and the immanence of the Lord, followed by the salutations to Him who presedes over five fold acts of creation, preservation, dissolution, illusion, and grace.

"ஆதியாம் பாதமலர் - அந்தமாஞ் செந்தளிர்கள்
தோற்றமாம் பொற்பாதம் - உயிர்க்கும் போகமாம்
[பூங்கழல்கள்
ஈரும் இணையடிகள் - காணுத புண்டரீகம்
ஆட்கொண்டருளும் பொன்மலர்கள் — போற்றி"

Hail to Thy primal Foot's Flowar ... To Thy Roseate Feet, the Immanet One, Hail to the Golden Feet, the source of Life. Hail to the Flowery Feet the joy of life. Hail to the twain feet, the end of Life. Hail to the Golden Flowers that made us His Grace (174).

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## 8. திருவம்மானை: TIRU AMMANAI.

*Place:* Tiruvannamalai.

*Quintessence:* The ecstasy of Ananda.

The soul of this poem lies in its incommunicable feeling of ineffable joy. This is an example of a lyric where the matter is subordinated to the inspiration of

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1. Vide Siva Gnana Botham Sutra XI "as the soul enables the eye to see and itself sees, so the Lord enables the soul to know and itself knows. And this Advaitha knowledge and undying love will unite it to His Feet."

feeling. The poet's inner experience is lit up with a halo of lighted joy and we feel that we hear the joyful tinkle of the cymbals of the children who play the game, for so ingeniously has the poet woven the harmony of sound and feeling into the selected words as in Stanza 193.

> முன்னானை மூவர்க்கு முற்றுமாய் முற்றுக்கும்
> பின்னானைப் பிஞ்ஞகனைப் பேணு பெருந்துறையின்
> மன்னானை வானவனை மாதியலும் பாதியனைத்
> தென்னானைக் காவானைத் தென்பாண்டி நாட்டானை
> அன்னானை அம்மானைப் பாடுதுங்காண் அம்மானாய்.

In Tiru Ammanai, the poet dwells in gratitude most profound, on the work of the Grace of God within his heart, and on the central experience of his life when the God-Guru manifested Himself to him at Tirup Perunthurai. The Guru's appearance, initiation and the disciple's dedication have a ring of sincerity and this form of poetry fits in well with his mood of communicating the joy he experienced with the others and who can be better than the young children in whose lips, the song breathes innocence and buoyancy? The refrain of the canto is "Sing ye and Ammanay see?" Sing on whom? The song is one of linked sweetness on the greatness of the Lord. He emphasises the following ideas on the Lord: that he is transcendent, unknown even to the understanding of the Gods Brahma and Vishnu. Though he is beyond the comprehension of all, (Stanza 176.)

> பாரார் விசும்புள்ளார் பாதாளத்தார் புறத்தார்
> ஆராலுங் காண்டற் கரியன்.

yet the wonder is that He is accessible to all(எமக்கெளிய பேராளன் தென்னன் பெருந்துறையன்) in His manifested form at the sanctum at Tirupperunthurai,which idea is

stressed in almost every stanza.In this Immanent Form, the Lord will abide for ever in the hearts of those who love Him with steadfast faith[1] (1. 37 stanza 181). There are puranic references to the Lord helping an old woman at Madura by carrying the sand to dam the Vaigai bank and then being beaten by the Pandya King (stanza 182 lines 47 and 48) and to His magnanimity at Daksha's sacrifice in Stanza 189 which are worked out to elucidate this aspect of Godhead. It contains praises of God in His formless state and as a presence seen in His temples reveals His splendour by enumerating his acts of Grace as alluded in the puranas and His attribute of Grace, Light, Wisdom, Truth, Love and Ananda - (1-65-66) " Leaving aside the Great gods, He came down to Earth as a sage and called me to free me from the misery of birth and grant release." The lowly One filled my heart with love, entered (S. 176) therein as essence of sweetness and taught me the way of Truth. The Lord in order to save me came to earth (S. 177) His body gleaming with holy ash(தோட்கொண்ட நீற்றாய்) and thrilled my heart with joy untold. Of his own accord, He came in flesh (S 178) and enriched a sinner like me with the tender love of a mother so that I tasted sensations queer and inward happiness when the essence of love, wisdom and joy appeared in the horizon of my heart. His Grace transformed (S. 179) my hard nature like that of filling a stone with the juice of a ripe fruit[2] and after the learned Guru had destroyed my sinful deeds, He plunged me in the fountain of mercy.

1. ஐயாதே உள்குவான் உள்ளிருக்கும் உள்ளானை.

2. கல்லைப் பிசைந்து கனியாக்கித் தன்கருணை
வெள்ளத் தழுத்தி—179.

The poet is on the summit of his experience. The nature of His initiation is given in 1.33-35 S. 180. He instructed me in things unknown (vide Tiruccadagam) revealed Himself to me in His Form of Light and Truth and granted me the honey of Grace so that 'We' might aim at attaining the goal of blissful Release, while the world looked on and smiled.[1]

The Beloved, the Great Mother, the One who moves the seven worlds made me His at Tirupperunthurai (S. 181). He showed me His Gracious Feet (S.184) கண்ணார் கழல்காட்டி நாயேனை யாட்கொண்ட. Denying his vision to Brahma and Vishnu, He conquered me in this birth, and saved me from future births (186).

Stanzas 181 and 190 deal with the evolution of the soul (Vide Sivapuranam 1. 26-32). The poet describes his world-weariness when the Guru appeared to him like a sovereign with all the essence of light and joy and received him into His devotional service, melting his soul, trampling on his sins, and showing him the way of Truth. Then he was filled with happiness and recounts all the acts he would do to his Lord in Stanza 161. He will garland and embrace Him; lost in rapture he Will join Him, clasp or shrink from Him, seek Him again, think of Him alone, pine for Him and then blossom with love for Him. Never was an experience so raised to the flame of incantation, such as we feel in every line of this poem. Stanza 192, 193 and 194 dissect the blessedness of rapture and live in

1, காட்டாதன வெல்லாங் காட்டிச் சிவங்காட்டித்
தாள்தாமரை காட்டித் தன்கருணைத் தேன்காட்டி
நாட்டார் நகைசெய்ய நாம்வேலை வீடெய்த
ஆள்தான் கொண் டாண்டவா பாடுதுங்காண் அம்மானாய்

our memory by their accents of high beauty. *பற்று வான், பற்றிய பேரானந்தம் பாடுதுங்காண் அம்மானாய்* (194).

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## 9. *திருப்பொற் சுண்ணம்:* THE HOLY GOLD DUST

Here the women who pound the frankincence in the temple courtyard are represented as singing twenty stanzas. The saints, Gods and the Saktis are invited to join in the pounding of the gold dust which shall be offered to the Lord who dances with Sakti by His side and to the Lord at Kanchi who shall free them from the bondage of attachment. What happiness flows in the company of these folks who are engaged in the worship of the Lord. The world looks to Him as one vast mortar and each devotee holds the pestle and pounds the dust.

An allegory is given in stanza **203**. The pestle of Meru symbolising strong faith pounds the saffron of Truth in the Earth's mortar. Stanza 204 is full of rhythmic repititions where the sounds echo the sense. The mind dances to the tune of Siva, the eyes of devotees dance with the tears of love and grace (Sakti) and Siva dance in sweet harmony, while births tie themselves to unsaved souls and dance. This is an excellent imagery of the world responding to the cosmic Dance.

Thus they sing, on the Lord's majesty: "He is the Vedas and the sacrifice. True to the truthful and veiled to the false. Light, joy, perfect Ananda to the Enlightened: Dark, sorrow ful, imperfect and fettered to those in bondage. The first and last sing and pound the holy dust of Gold." (**214**).

The poet moves on from shrine to shrine, viewing the world objectively, seeing in the ordinary lives of the people, the imprint of divine Grace, and interpreting their homely actions as outlets to pay homage and praise to the Great Ruler. In the "Leave me not" lyric, நீத்தல் விண்ணப்பம் the poet viewed the world as a theatre of loneliness, a cruel desert that separates him from his Lord. In these odes, though his soul still hungers for the bliss of Infinity, he finds peace and happiness in the sacred shrines that he visits and his message to the world is significant:

> Whatever work ye do,
> Do it unto the Lord, and sing ye His Praises.
> சிற்றம்பலத் தெங்கள் செல்வம்பாடி.

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## 10. திருக்கோத்தும்பீ "YE HUMMING BEES!."[1]

*Place* : Thillai.

*Quintessence* : In perfect peace with the Lord.

The Bee represents the human soul and the poet calls upon it to seek the Feet of the Lord in order to enjoy tranquil happiness. Like the Bee the soul must not feel satisfied to drink the honey that springs from the fragrant feet of God (Grace 217). In the 3rd line of each stanza, the soul's message is relayed through the Bee to the Master. This is a song, where no plaintive sad music steals from the heart of the poet. He bids the Bee sing mellifluously (குளிர்ந்தூதாய் 1.52) and we enjoy the 'Rasa' of 'Santi'.

Stanza 216, "Who knows me?" strikes the keynote of this poem. Who am I? What is the destiny

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1. Vide, திருமங்கையாழ்வார் : திருக்கோத்தும்பீ.

of my soul and what is Truth? are questions asked by the poet. Man must not be content with fleeting delights but should seek to have his sweetest joy at the feet of the Lord for His grace is unfailing. The poet alludes to St. Kannappar as the highest embodiment of a Bhakta's love; he says even though he is not so devoted like Kannappar, yet the Lord has granted him incomparable Grace and in order to make him good has kept him on earth and called him to Thillai. That he is reconciled to this cruel order of separation from the Lord is obvious in this (stanza 218) where he understands the purpose of the Lord's will.

In a world that worships false ideals, midst the confused strifes of diverse desires, He protects the faithful devotees and elevates them to His Peace (220). Having taken refuge at His feet, the poet's sorrows flee at the touch of His overflowing grace (223). "The Lord won the poet not by any forceful means but by love and compassion." (225).

Manikkavacagar's grand role was that of the songster to the Lord - 'தன்னடிகள் பாடுவித்த நாயகனை' (226). The Lord accepted his service with the tenderness of a mother. Every one knew of the Guru's gracious revelation to him though none knew except the Master and himself, of his feeble love to Him - 'நான் தனக்கன்பின்மை நானுந்தானும் அறிவோம்'. We hear the ring of the childlike trustfulness in the verse 227.

Humanity down the ages has asked the salf-same baffling question that the poet asks in Stanza 229, so touchingly. "How far from our beloved would we be - my mind and soul. If He and His grace had not

enlightened us?[1]" Tagore asked the same question in The Gardener: "How far art Thou hidden in my heart, O, fruit". The feeling and thinking man cannot (One of the dynamic factors of Saiva Siddhanta is to trace the relationship of the human soul and God.) gauge the exact distance that separates him from the Master, except that he realises the fact that but for His grace he would still be enslaved by the unreal pleasures. The poet derives great joy in the contemplation of his Lord's love. Without despising him for his mean qualities, the generous lover abided in his heart and illumined it so brilliantly that one by one his sorrow vanished (233).[2] Thus His lofty grace lifted him and he felt like a dog being elevated to a dais, to the peace, perfect peace of the gleaming Lord (234).

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## 11. திருத்தெள்ளேணம்: THE TELLENAM DANCE.

*Place*: Thillai.

*Quintessence*: Union with Siva.

The poet has been sending his message of love through the bee in the last poem, and expressing his longing to commune with the Lord. In this canto, he sings the song of love; he is very happy in the presence of Siva, and tells the whole world of his blessed experience, through the songs of the children as they

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1. நானும் என்சிந்தையும் நாயகனுக் கெவ்விடத்தோம்
தானும் தன்தையலும் தாழ்சடையோன் ஆண்டிலே
[னேல்

2. கள்வன் கடியன் கலதியிவன் என்னாதே
வள்ளல் வரவர வந்தொழிந்தான் என்மனத்தே. (233)

dance and pray.[1] Happiness can best be expressed through the lips of children. The poet's mission is to sing (1. 45 : 226). Tagore in his Gitanjali echoes these sentiments when he said "It is only as a singer I can come to Thee, O Lord."

Sing we a thousand hallelujahs to HIM who came to him as a Brahmin sage. "அந்தணனாய் ஆண்டு கொண்டான் ஆயிரந்திருநாமம் பாடி நாம் தெள்ளேணங் கொட்டாமோ." In his loving service, the sage found delight. How astounding a change it was, when his egoism vanished and he became a devotee of the Master! "நாம் ஒழிந்து சிவமானவா பாடி." The vividness of his description as he approached the Guru, is charged with sincerity (1 : 23 : 240). This is a fine example of what A. C. Bradley in his Oxford Lectures on "The Sublime" termed "sublimity in poetry." Here, the sublimity of his poetry touched at the point of his wonderful conversion, and tingles over and responds at all points. "The sublime," says A. C. Bradley, "is apprehended as the Infinite and the imagery is an expression of it. The greatness is not only immeasurable but it is *always* unmeasured. The sublime has been said to awake in us the consciousness of our own infinity: and astonishment, rapture, awe, and even self-abasement are among the emotions evoked by sublimity."

This is how the poet describes his experience at Tirupperunthurai: "My words faltered, my mind enlightened, tears streamed from my eyes; உரையாட உள்ளொளியாட உண்மாமலர்க் கண்களில் நீர்த் திரையாட." When the insignia of the Lord's feet was laid

1. Prof. K. Subramania Pillai thinks it is a game where the sand is sifted : vide page 241 of his Edition of Tiruvasagam.

on his head, his desires (241) and pride of self died down (245) as he plunged into the ocean of bliss and light. He had his full, while the saints still hungered. The sweet cadence in this stanza is inimitable.[1] No more births; no more griefs; no more wallowing in delusion and pining. At the feet of the indestructible Lord, his soulless existence, meaningless and selfish, were destroyed. In stanza 252, we get one of the fine gems of poetry dealing with the purification of the soul.

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## 12. திருச்சாழல்:[2] TIRUCCALAL.

*Place:* Thillai.

*Quintessence:* On Siva's compassionate Energy.

This lyric is beautiful in form and seems to me to fall under the class of the dialogue of ideas, represented by the dialogues of Dryden or Plato. Here the aim is the logical establishment of a definite set of ideas and in this case interpreting the puranic episodes related to Siva as embodying the tenets of Saivism. The dialogue is given a setting to create the necessary atmosphere, to create an attitude of sympathy, to arouse interest in the subject of the dialogue. The poet here appears to refute the arguments of the Buddhists by making the dumb Buddhist Princess of Ceylon whom he has cured, to rebut the arguments against Siva's appearance and his sports contained in the puranas. Rhetoric

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1. முத்திக் குழன்று முனிவர் குழாம் நனிவாட
அத்திக் கருளி அடியேனை யாண்டு கொண்டு
பத்திக் கடலுட் பதித்த பரஞ்சோதி
தித்திக்கு மாபாடித் தெள்ளேணங் கொட்டாமோ (246)
2. Vide திருமங்கையாழ்வார்—திருச்சாழல்.

is judiciously employed and the mystical meaning of each of his manifold acts and appearances is brought out well; so the final effect on the reader is more exhilarating than if we had read the arguments in the way of direct exposition.

"Calal"[1] is the name of a play of which the verse is the accompaniment. The first two lines of eaeh verse propose to ask a question and the last two lines contain the answer. It is sung by a chorus of girls with much clapping of hands. The message the poet sought to convey was the unravelling of the true glory of His Lord, by bringing out the significance of the symbols and puranic associations of his Lord. Some commentators think that the poetry also contains a refutation of the Buddhist doctrine, though there is no internal evidence to prove the truth of the incident of our poet's vindication of the Saivaite faith as against Buddhism, nor of his curing the dumb princess from Ceylon.

The Lord is Infinite, Transcendent; and so He manifests Himself to man, through His Grace which is symbolised by the Sakti - Uma - by His side. The poets also stressed the authority of the scriptures as the revealed "word of God" (stanza 274).

The allusions to "Thakkan" are given prominence to show that even from arrogance, the Lord saves souls and shows mercy upon them. 'Ahankara' is one of the root evils of man and Gods, and it proves fatal to the ultimate happiness of man. The poet dwells on the anecdotes where the Lord has cured the Gods, including Brahma and Vishnu, of their 'Ahankara' or self love or pride and showed them such infinite mercy

1. Vide Pope's explanation: Page 159 Tiruvasagam.

even as to swallow the poison that emanuated from the sea of milk. So the Lord manifests Himself to us and in us in meek grace and not in His sublime flory.

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## 13. திருப்பூவல்லி: THE SACRED LILY FLOWERS.

or

## THE FLOWER - CREEPER.[1]

*Place:* Thillai.

*Quintessence:* Song of Victory over Maya.

The poem is a hymn of victory over Maya - the fleeting delusion of life. Young children call their play-mates to cull flowers for laying them at the feet of the Lord. The Editors of the Siddhanta Deepika in the February issue of 1898 argued thus: The word பூ+அல்+இ means பூமி world+இருளை darkness the negative of these and the whole phrase gives the esoteric meaning, "Release from the dark world of Maya". The chorus in each verse "பூவல்லி கொய்யாமோ", "pluck away the dark world," brings out the sense more particularly also. This darkness can only vanish when the light dawns on the horizon. The hymn begins with, இணையார் திருவடி என்றலைமேல் வைத்தலுமே துறந்தொழிந்தோம் "by the placing of the gracious lotus feet on my head, my bonds are released." This interpretation is discarded by many modern critics. Such esoteric rendering does not fit in with our idea of lyrical poetry.

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2. Both the interpretations are given by Prof K. Subramania Plllai in his edition of Tiruvasagam though Dr. Pope adopts the former.
Vide Pope's interpretation Page 175.

We may attempt another interpretation. The plucking of flowers is one of the delightful pastimes of young girls and the refrain in this poem echoes the call of the poet to all to seek the pleasurable outlet of service to the Lord and lay it at His Feet. This alone will lead them to the mastery over the world's pain and maya. The flowers of service should be woven into a garland for laying it at His Feet. Stanza 276, states that God lives in the honey comb, buried in the heart of the marutha tree, referring to the shrine of Tirvidaimarudur (திருவிடைமருதூர்) and instead of fruitlessly hunting each flower for little honey, if we go to the honey comb itself, we will drink of the Divine Joy to our heart's content - Man deserves to be spurned like a dog but the Lord, much more loving than our own earthly mother, is extremely gracious (277). Dhaksha the first born son, Sun and others who asserted their egoism, contrary to the will of the Lord, were punished by sorrow and disgrace (278). Those who search for the Lord are sure to find Him within themselves. Many examples are related where the Lord has rendered help to cries for aid (280).

"This one who manifested Himself as the *Three*, has given man a body and other organs (out of maya) only as a means of salvation. So bow to the Lord with your head, with your mouth, praise his victorious Foot. Join the society of Baktas (281) learning by example and by precept." This is the import of verse 281. "He showed the true path of life and the reason for His consecrating me was to free me from the cares of worldly acts and deeds and above all from deadly desires. The way of love to Him was the way of Bliss," and this was his special message in this ode (292). It closes

with one 'or two instances of His manifestations and Grace which are so difficult for man to comprehend namely His swallowing of the fearful poison and His burning of *Tripura* and His special manifestation to the poet.

*கோவாகி வந்தெம்மைக் குற்றேவல் கொண்டருளும்*
*பூவார் கழல் பரவிப் பூவல்லி கொய்யாமோ 294.*

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## 14. திருவுந்தியார்: THE UENTHYAR.

*Place:* Thillai.

*Quintessence:* The triumphs of Arul-Sakti.

"Uenthyar" is supposed to mean the players at a game played in a circle, where the ball is sent flying aloft. The poem opens with the incident of Siva's burning of Tripura which mystically may mean the destruction of the "Three Malas" of man. When man reaches the stage of inner illumination, "Mala Paripagam" and "Iruvinai Oppu", he is ready to receive the Grace of the Lord which would break through the hardest obstacle. This idea is poetically conveyed with reference to the puranic episode when Siva was accompanied in a chariot drawn by Brahma, with Vishnu as his arrow, Agni the barb, Yama its feather the vedas the bow and Gayatri the bowstring and then one wheel sank and thus showed that without His Grace, all their minute preparations were of no avail (Stanza 295-293). His smile can relieve loads of evil, minimise the powers of Anava, Karma and Maya and penetrate the hidden recesses of man's soul. Next is related Dhakshan's story already alluded to and explained in the previous ode.

We may attempt another interpretation. The plucking of flowers is one of the delightful pastimes of young girls and the refrain in this poem echoes the call of the poet to all to seek the pleasurable outlet of service to the Lord and lay it at His Feet. This alone will lead them to the mastery over the world's pain and maya. The flowers of service should be woven into a garland for laying it at His Feet. Stanza 276, states that God lives in the honey comb, buried in the heart of the marutha tree, referring to the shrine of Tirvidaimarudur (திருவிடைமருதூர்) and instead of fruitlessly hunting each flower for little honey, if we go to the honey comb itself, we will drink of the Divine Joy to our heart's content - Man deserves to be spurned like a dog but the Lord, much more loving than our own earthly mother, is extremely gracious (277). Dhaksha the first born son, Sun and others who asserted their egoism, contrary to the will of the Lord, were punished by sorrow and disgrace (278). Those who search for the Lord are sure to find Him within themselves. Many examples are related where the Lord has rendered help to cries for aid (280).

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of the beauty of spiritual truth mingling with the "Rasa" of poetry, and form of idea; "Sabda and Artha" resound the victory song of deliverance.

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16. திருப்பொன்னூசல்: ROCK THE GOLDEN SWING.

*Place:* Uttarakosa Mangai?

Thillai?

Each stanza makes a reference to the Uttarakosa Mangai shrine and may have been composed by the poet, after going through the experiences sketched in, "Leave me not" (நீத்தல் விண்ணப்பம்) ode. In this ode, he speaks of the grace that flooded his heart and purified his loneliness. Or it may have been composed at Thillai, where the poet would have recalled his "emotions gathered round the Uttarakosa Mangai shrine, in tranquillity," as he often did in most of the other odes.

*Quintessence:* In tune with Divine Mercy.

Rocking in a swing is one of the popular pastimes in India. After the Kummi dance of the last canto, the children settle down quietly on the swing and rock themselves to the sweet music of this hymn which sings of the reconciliation of the poet to live with the illimitable grace of God and bide his time on earth. The dejection wave(நீத்தல் விண்ணப்பம்)had swept past him, and no longer did he resent or pine at his enforced separation from the Lord. In this lyric, the poet depicts the vision that sweetened his existence. Grace

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1. Vide S. D. page, 206. Maya : The charms in each verse.

appeared to him in the form of Siva-Sakti whenever he stood in need of its succour (332-21-22 and 334: 31). They looked so enchanting like a beauteous (335:40) peacock moving on a swan. They both appeared to him riding on a charger (336: 45). When tormented by the Pandyan King, the poet was helped by the Lord who led the procession of horses. This may allude to that unhappy incident in his life, when he failed to produce the horses. The poet's duty was to sing and sing increasingly in praise of Him - மாலுக்கரியானை வாயார நாம்பாடி (47).That was his only way of expressing his boundless gratitude for His sublime grace.

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## 17. அன்னைப்பத்து: MOTHER! SAID SHE.

*Place:* Thillai.

*Quintessence:* The soul's plenitude.

The following ten stanzas tell the story of the poet's fullness of love for his great Beloved. It is in the form of a love poem where the girl (the poet) addresses indirectly her mother, on the irresistible qualities of her dearly-prized lover. It is in the form of a soliloquy. The girl assuages her grief by dwelling on the imposing grandeur of her Lord. The recurrence of the refrain; "அன்னே யென்னும்" "Mother, said she" in the second and fourth lines of each of the ten stanzas heightens the resonant sweetness of the verse. The rhyme follows the sound of the cymbals which signifies the vibrating "Madam", energy of the Lord; தங்கையில் தானமிருந்த வாறன்னே யென்னும் (1. 32).

He - her beloved - is the eternal bridegroom (1. 9) நித்தமணாளர் and நாதிரிந் நாதனார் who has conquered her heart உள்ளங்கவர்வராால் (28). His Form, she saw, clad in tiger skin, wearing the snake and holy ashes, symbolical of His acts of Preservation, Creation and Dissolution respectively. " My soul is pining for him " (என்னுள்ளம் வாடும் p. 16). He came a begging at her door and the alms of love, she gave. No sooner had He gone than her heart would sink in grief. " Why is this so?" (என்னுள்ளம் நையுமிது வென்னே 1.36) she fondly asks her mother.

Crowned with Cassia, crescent, vilvam and phrenzies, the Great, Majestic lover had bewitched her with the madness of love. What a wonder ? (என்ன அதிசயம் அன்னே யென்னும் 24.)

So simply and artlessly reads the lyric where the poet celebrates his love to the Lord in the form of " Agathurai," Love lyrical poetry.

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## 18. குயிற் பத்து:[1] THE KUYIL DECAD.

*Place* : Thillai.

*Quintessence* : A plea for greater love.

The lyrical quality of these two odes is much admired by all lovers of poetry. In their airiness and sweetness, in their spontaneity and full throated ease, there is a new song of birds. Still believing himself to be the girl in love, the poet coaxes the Kuyil which is mystically the human soul to call on his divine mate

1. Andal's Tirumoli - குயிற் பத்து.

and to ask of the Lord, to enrich his love. Manivásagar's heart is as expansive as the boundless ocean and he can satisfy that insatiable longing to be one with Him, only by singing the Glory of his Beloved. The poet invites the sweet throated Kuyil to convey the message of his intense love to the Master. Shelley found consolation when he proclaimed to the world his idealistic prophetic message of, " If winter comes, can spring be far behind ?", on the wings of the wild west wind.

There is a peculiar aptness in the poet's reference to the story of Mandodari, the Chief queen of Ravana King of Ceylon, to whom the Lord showed Grace.

" He gave me illumination (351) to His loved devotees, the Lord is the fascinating Beloved, the joyous Giver of great Bliss-our God came from his abode to grant us immeasurable bliss. இன்பந்தருவன் குயிலே அன்பன் அமுதளித்தூறும்...ஆனந்தன். Riding on a steed he appeared to him as a great luminous flame, he appeared to Brahma and Vishnu. He it was who came down to earth as a sage - Guru and initiated him (356-357) thus: எந்தமராம் இவனென்றிங் கென்னையும் ஆட்கொண்டருளும் " He is one of us, and called me to him."

Thus the message is poetically conceived and the central idea is that whoever approaches Him with great love, is sure to find refuge. The poet speaks in moving language of his consecration. He was singled out to sing his glory. The more he sips from the cup of Love, the more will he be worthy to sing the song of love to Him. There is no force that can stop the current of his love flowing to the Ocean of Bliss. The bird is known as the " philomel " of India, and so he addresses

this singing bird to convey his message of love to the Lord. A small bird of azure hue, spangled with gold, it haunts the leafy dales and flowery groves, pecking at fruits (13-14) and spreading delight (1.8.17) by its enchanting music.

The poet like Keats wooing the nightingale and Shelly the skylark, follows the bird and promises to be its airy companion, if it will do his bidding – "Call Him to come to me" – pleasing strains of Love! Love's tale of "meeting and parting" is exquisitely narrated.

The whole poem is full of pleasing fancies and the song echoes the plaintive plea of the poet to realise & be one with the Lord always and all times – "He who is full of love, sweetest bliss and who grants such ineffable Happiness" இன்பந் தருவன்..............அன்பன் அமுதளித்தூறும் ஆனந்தன் (353).

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## 19. திருத்தசாங்கம்: THE ROYAL INSIGNIA.

*Place:* Thillai.

*Quintessence:* Impression of His ten signs.

Here are given the ten insignia, usually attributed to the kings, but which Manikkavasagar has worked out for his King of Kings. The parrot is called upon by the poet, to recount the various insignia of the Lord Supreme (Vide Kirti Tiru Ahaval 101; 124).

The name of the King of Kings, Lord of Devas is Sivaperuman. His sacred domain from where he rules the hearts of the devotees is the Pandya land. Uttarakosa Mangai is His sacred abode. His river is the stream

of joy that rains showers of bliss from high, purifying their souls of all evils.

The rock that points the way to Mukti or release is the Mount of Grace, which dispels the darkness of the world and sends out the rays of wisdom, leading the soul to the light.

He rides on the celestial steed, accompanied by the chanting of the maids there.

The Trident, which destroys the "Three Malas," thus freeing His loved saints from their sins is His weapon.

He holds the source of vibrant sound "Nadam" as His Drum that shall confound man's innate foes and trumpet the sweet music of divine bliss.

The Lord's garland is made of the creeper grass "Arugu", which shall ward off evil.

The stainless banner of the bull waves high while the foes are cowed down in defeat.

Thus the Lord of Tirupperunthurai, reigned supreme in the poet's heart and these ten royal symbols were sealed in his heart as a proof of his eternal fidelity and servitude.

CONCLUSIONS:-

These thirteen lyrics form a unit of experience wherein the poet dwells on the wondrous nature of Grace manifesting itself in manifold ways, to all devotees of God and to him in particular. The links in the chain of Grace that bound him and his Lord are described with such spontaneity and freshness in

thought and feeling. They possess a unity of form, idea and even time. Tiruvannamalai, Thillai and Uttarakosa Mangai are mentioned as the places where the poet is said to have sung the respective lyrics. If he is still on the *road* to Thillai, then the Thillai lyrics in this section would seem inconsistent. Therefore we are of opinion that he must have recollected these experiences associated with the shrines he visited, and in the tranquillity of Thillai, he must have given them the final shape. The place and buoyancy that mark these cantos, both in thought, feeling and expression strongly indicate that this could have been possible only when the poet realised the peace that was in Thillai. The flowers of love and grace, had not bloomed fully before that period of his life.

Each lyric breathes the naturelness and artlessness and naivete of children, so that reading them, we enjoy the simplicity, directness, concentration and outspokenness of the poet. This combined with grace, charm and delicacy of thought, saturated with love for the Lord, marks the strength of refined maturity. With regard to the technique, its charm is a melody, tunefulness, sweetness, fluency and ease.

These thirteen lyrics mark the finest epitome of the Siddhantin's ideal of Divine Grace. Gods, Vishnu and Brahma, have tasted the bliss of Siva's Grace. In the hour of trial, asuras and devas, Thakkan and Echan, Yama, Sun, Moon and Fire have called upon Siva for help and been blessed. To those in company with the foes of Truth, to Mododari and the asuras of Tripura, He has shown his tender compassion. The faithful devotees whose love to Him surpassed the heights and depths of understanding, like St. Kannappa

and St. Candeswara, revelled in His wondrous grace. He came down to earth (10. 218–18. 357) as a Guru and melted into honey even the poet's stony heart. His lowliness to enter his despicable, polluted life and change his heart to overflow with sweetness of bliss and love, speak of His great Grace, transcending the love of a mother's affection (15. 328; 11. 241; 12. 282). His grace flows into every nook and corner of the world, purifying the hearts of men and the poet astounds us by his implicit faith in the sovereignty of Grace, to lead us to the Bliss of Union with Siva.

Though the ocean of Bliss (Ananda) may lie at our feet, we shall continue to thirst for its refreshing waters if the Lord does not will to give it to us. We can take only that which comes from Him. Of our own accord, we cannot sip the waters of grace, and quench our dying thirst. He must teach us first how to sip it (*அவனருளாலே அவன்றாள் வணங்கி* Sivapuranam 1.10) and then we shall know not only to sip but quaff and shall never know any satisfaction, till we are chocked with its mighty force and honeyed sweetness.

*உருகிப் பெருகி உளங்குளிர முகந்து கொண்டு*
*பருகற் கினிய பரங்கருணைத் தடங்கடலை*
*மருவித் திகழ் தென்னன் வார்கழலே நினைந்தடியோம்*
*திருவைப் பரவிநாம் தெள்ளேணம் கொட்டாமோ - 249.*

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# F

# THE POETRY OF LOVE.

## 20. திருப்பள்ளியெழுச்சி: THE MORNING HYMN.

*Place:* Tirupperunthurai.

*Quintessence:* The Vanishing Night.

The night gives us rest and recoups our strength. In this lyric, the call is to the awakening soul to use his renewed energies aright, in the path of salvation and thus realise the high purpose for which we are born in this earth by the supreme grace of Lord Siva; " இந்தப்பூமி சிவனுய்யக் கொள்கின்ற வாறென்று "

In Tirupperunthurai, Manikkavasagar's soul was first awakened to face the light of God's Grace. While journeying from Madura, with the purpose of purchasing horses for his Royal Master, the sun of Truth appeared in the form of a Guru under the Kuruntha Tree and awakened him to realise the destiny of his soul. The night that enveloped him vanished. He was exceedingly happy in the company of his Guru and His holy Saints, when one day, they too left him. His God Guru, he pictures, as slumbering in the shrine at Tirupperunthurai and the poet adopts the form popular in India of awakening the Lord from His sleep. This reveille is the first business in the Temples.

Tondaradippodi Alwar also has sung a morning hymn which has the same refrain "Wilt Thou not arise and awake, my Lord?" In திருமாலை "The Holy Garland," the Lord wakes him up to realise Him as the highest Truth, whereas in திருப்பள்ளியெழுச்சி, the Saint awakes the Lord who rests in Peace after saving

him from the snares of the world. In one poem, he tells of the Lord's efforts to save him and in the other hymn to Morning, he tells of how his efforts to wake the Lord succeeded, and praises service to the devotees as his great aim. There are many striking resemblances in conception and technique between Manikkavasagar's and Tondaradippodi Alwar's "Morning Hymns". They both describe the natural sights and sounds of morning with equal felicity and are at one in their request to serve Him and to make them one with His devotees:- உன்னடியார்க்காட்படுத்தாய்.

In the first verse, the poet hails the source of his life. The refrain, "My Lord, wilt Thou not rise from Thy repose ?" is full of tenderness. He imagines the Lord to be in the "Tirobhava" or "veiling" state. 'Tis Dawn : he invokes the Lord by offering flowers at His flowery Feet, so that His Grace might flower in his heart. The terms 'பூ, மலர், பூங்கழல், அருள்மலரும்' evoke poetic beauty. His beauteous smile of grace is like the blooming of the lotus flowers, around the shrine at Perunthurai. This is one of the singularly artistic uses of words to embellish the poet's ideas. The metaphor becomes the 'Sun' in the second stanza. Delightful scenes of the morning are described. The cocks crow ; the larks sing ; the small birds join in chorus ; the conch shells sound ; the star light pales before the rising glory of the sun. While nature revels in activity after the repose of the night, inside the temple break the songs from the lute and the veena. The Vedic hymns are chanted, and flower garlands are offered, The devotees worship him, singing songs, some crying and some lost in deep adoration.

'Besides singing and dancing in praise of Thee,
We do not know of any who have seen Thee
Thou who art beyond human thought
Forgive us our sins and come to us in Grace' (375).

The poet longs to see the Lord face to face. In the Temple, some worship Him in the attitude of loving wives. The poet feels that in this birth he cannot ever join Him and so his plea is to release him from birth (373). The Lord is easily accessible to His loved devotees who enjoy His presence, and nearness in the Temples. At the same time, they understand His transcendence.

*அறிதற் கரிதென எளிதென அமரரும் அறியார்*
*இதுவவன் திருவுரு இது அவனெனவே.* (374)

Then the poet asks plaintively, "What service dost Thou demand from us, let us know, Lord ?" Milton asked the same question on his blindness and answered "They also serve who only stand and wait." Happiness flows at the thought that the Lord dwells in the lowly hearts of His faithful saints (*நின் அடியார் பழங்குடில் தொறும் எழுந்தருளியவனே* 375). The poet fondly remembered the day He showed His form to him and impressed his love for the Shrine at Perunthurai. He showed Himself as a Guru too. Again and again, he wants to see this vision. Even the Gods regret why they are not born on earth, for it is *the* place to enjoy this sweet Grace (376). "So come Thou with Thy Grace (Sakti) and save us – Oh, refreshing Energy" (377).

This poem reveals the stage of spiritual development of our poet. Others sing, chant, meditate, but he has stepped over the stages of Cariya, Kriya and

Yoga Paths and is on the plane of 'Gnana Marga'. So the answer to his question 'எது எமைப்பணி கொளு மாறது' is that the Lord should illuminate him with divine wisdom: " கண்ணகத்தே நின்று களிதரு தேனே " (376.35).

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## 21. கோயில் மூத்த திருப்பதிகம்: THE FIRST TEMPLE LYRIC.

*Place:* Thillai.

*Quintessence:* Thy Everlasting will.

The Lord is ever immanent in the world and the Gods too wish to seek Him on earth only. They saw His mystic Dance at Thillai. All these suggestions are implied in the last stanza of the previous canto.

In the first verse of this lyric sung at Thillai, we get a memorable picture of the Lord and His Grace and their relationship to the 'world and soul'. The stanza is called by many critics as the 'Heart of Tiruvasagam'[1] the Mantra Sloka of the highest advaita Truth, the charama Sloka[2] of the divine Song.

" Grace dwells in Thy midst : Thou in Her :
And Ye Both dwell in my midst – Who am Thy own (child) –
(If this be so) come, before me, and fulfil my longing

1. Vide : Siddhanta Deepika Vol : 5.
2. Srila Sri Siva Arunagiri Mudaliyar in his edition of Tiruvasagam makes reference to this poem as திருவாசக ஹிருதய மந்த்ர சுலோகம்.

உடையாள் உன்றன் நடுவிருக்கும் உடையாள் நடுவுள் நீயிருத்தி
அடியேன் நடுவுள் இருவீரும் இருப்பதானால் அடியேன் உன்
அடியார் நடுவுள் இருக்கும் அருளைப்புரியாய் பொன்னம்பலத்தெம்
முடியாமுதலே என் கருத்து முடியும் வண்ணம் முன்னின்றே.(375)

To be in the midst of Thy loved devotees – This Grace be mine, Oh, Primal Lord, whose Being knows no end,

Who art in Thillai's golden Hall ! – 378.

The word 'உடையாள்' connotes complete possession and ownership of the other, so that it is indistinguishable from the owner. 'Parasakti' is the manifested grace of the Lord, through whom the Lord carries out his five-fold acts in the world. Grace is in the midst of the Supreme Lord expressing these activities of Siva. Amid the manifestations of Grace, in the world, dwell Siva who would other wise not be perceived by "Acat." Thus in the midst of Sakti, we perceive the Lord. If it be true that the Lord as Siva - Sakti dwells in the hearts of His devotees, then the poet wishes to be one with them. How ? "He abides in me; He came to me of His own at Tirupperunthurai and make me His own. Therefore if he abides in me, who am His devotee, He will abide in the hearts of all true devotees. Therefore I want to be one with them." His song expresses the quintessence of the Hindu Religion: "Sakti in Siva ; Siva in Sakti : They in me and their children : *I in Them*" [1]

After singing the *திருப்பள்ளியெழுச்சி* 'Morning Song,' we imagine that the poet succeeded in his request that the Lord should come before him: *விரும் படியார் எண்ணகத்தாய் (376-36) மெய்க்கருணையும் நீயும் அவனியிற் புகுந்தெமையாட் கொள்ளவல்லாய்*" (379.39–40). In Thillai, he makes a further request that he can only find joy if he is always in the midst of God's devotees. '*அடியேங்*' is interpreted as 'child

1. Vide: Dr. Pope's Tiruvasagam Page 213.

and not 'servant' as is done by Dr. Pope:[1] The word 'அடியேன்' denotes fuller possession, greater love and closer relationship than that implied in the term 'servant' which deprives it of elevated love, such as only a child can feel for its Father. In the early stages of worship when fear and the wonder of greatness characterised their relationship, the devotee places himself as the Lord's servant (secretary) and when love takes 'possession of him, he becomes the favoured child of God, whom he addresses as 'Father'[2]

Tiruvasagam vindicates the reality of the soul's union with the Lord, and the eternal companionship with the Lord's devotees. The whole psalm is filled with the perfume of the sanctified soul. 'Turn not Thy face away from me' முகந்தான் தாரா விடின் முடிவேன் (380.12). "Life of my Life! If Thou dost not pity me, besides weeping, what else can I do?" (381.15—16).[3]

The mental anguish and helplessness, are brought out in stanza 382, by means of an expressive simile. Day and night, the heron waits on the bank patiently and sadly for its prey and grows weary in this game. It cannot give up its quest, for food is its sustenance. So also the poet waits before the Lord of Thillai in the 'Chit Sabai,' calling on Him, day and night and yearning into his beauteous grace, "அழுதேத்தியன்றுன் அருள்நோக்கி" for the chance bequest of grace to come his way and in this pursuit, he like a heron, has grown

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1. Sivagnana Botham Sutra XII.
2. Vide New Testament — St. John's Gospel: That they may all be one: As thou Father art in me; and I in Thee that they also may be one in us. I in them 'Thou in me that they may be made perfect in me"
3. முதலேயருள் தந்திருக்க இரங்குங் கொல்லோ என்
றழு மதுவேயன்றி மற்றென் செய்கேன் (381.15-16)

tired. The simile is elaborated in the Miltonic manner to include a grander image. The heron while waiting sees the other herons on the other side of the bank enjoying merrily and this only accentuates the grief of this lonely hapless bird, whose waiting seems futile in contrast. How beautifully this picture fits in with the mental state of the poet whose longing for liberation is intensified, when he sees the other children of God, revelling in bliss (கரைசேர் அடியார்களிசிறப்பக் காட்சிக் கொடுத்து) on the other shore of the Siva Nagar, and only he has to bide his time.

In stanza 384 the poet calls himself the cow without a cowherd, and moves us by his aching cries, pulsating heart beats and tears of anguish at his separation from his Lord and the holy saints. His request is for immediate recall or he will die of grief "செத்தே போனூற் சிறியாரோ" (385). "Call me to the blessedness of seeing Thee and Thy saints joyfully playing and rambling with one another. My Life bid me '*Come*' and join Thy company." Reading these stirring lines of melting poesy, we shed the same tears of divine sorrow that streamed forth from all such mystic poets as Manikkavasagar or the author of that beautiful middle English poem "The Pearl," or Tayumanavar or St. John of the Cross. The majesty of diction, the sublimity of thought and the beauty of feeling mingle in sweet harmony.

In stanza 386, is depicted the happiness of the blessed souls. Behold the bliss of Release! Laughter,revels, prostrations, adorations, singing Hail! Hail! His wond-rous glory, they (the devotees) extol, listen, and praise again. They chant his holiness, and dance, His Dance of Bliss (Ananda). Here we imagine the Lord taking

pity on him and calling him to join them. But the poet replies humbly that he would feel like a despicable dog (386); he was not yet fit to enjoy such bliss.[1] Therefore first and foremost, the Lord should grant him Grace and perfect him, so that he would be in a position to enjoy the fullest bliss (387).

The poem ends on the abiding hope that his trust in Him will not be in vain.

"My Lord! Have pity on me who pines for Thee"
387 (40)

ஒல்லா நீற்கும் உயிர்க்கிரங்கி அருளாய் என்னை
யுடையானே (387).

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22. கோயிற்றிருப்பதிகம்: PSALM OF THE HOUSE OF GOD.

*Place:* Thillai.

*Quintessence:* The Lakshana of the Highest Experience.

This poem is one of the favoured cantos in Tiruvasagam, where the nature of final realisation is analysed. The way of love merges with the way of knowledge.

In Thillai, the House of God, after wanderings far and wide, the poet stands face to face before the cosmic Dancer. He had been asked by his Guru to go to Thillai[2] and when he did arrive here, his joy was

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1. நரிப்பாய் நாயேன் இருப்பேனோ நம்பி இனித்தான்
நல்காயே (386).

2. கீர்த்தித்திருவகவல் L. 127—128.

unlimited. He sings this song in the rapture of realisation.

This poem is a grant symphony of love. With deep religious emotion, conveyed in linked sweetness, he addresses the Lord directly. "In Love and Joy, arise and come to me."

Oh Supreme Splendour – "எழுபரஞ்சோதி, இன்பமே, என்னுடையன்பே, உள்ளவாகாண வந்தருள்வாய்" (388). The poet could not have expressed his idea of God in more beauteous poetry.

He has wonderfully transmitted his desires into a series of questions, directly put to the form of splendour (wisdom) love and bliss. The song moves on the illuminating experience of the poet: "Thou gavest Thy love to me- What have I done to Thee? (389). Father mine, who art the bondsman of those that love Thee! Light of Truth that tramples falsehood! Teach me how I shall speak of Thee (390) O, Healing Balm of Life - Nearer to Thee, I lack nothing (391) Oh Perfection, Resplendent Form."

Thou hast made my body, thine abode - What more do I need from Thee?

In stanza 392, the poet has given an apt simile: "சிறைபெறு நீர்போற் சிந்தைவாய்ப் பாயும் சிவனே" - The poet realises that like a stream uprushing from the snowy heights of a mountain, breaking all bounds in the swiftness of its flow, so also Siva's love and grace rushed torrentially into the crevices of his heart - the fountain of Thought and fills it, to the brin, so that he is conscious of none but His Glory. "O, Splendour that

ariseth within me, in proportion to my begging. Having seen Thee face to face to-day, I rejoice".

Stanzas 394 and 397 are gems of exquisite melody and profound sublimity in Tiruvasagam. Sir P. Arunachalam had translated this stanza in Siddhanta Deepika, Page 50 Vol. No. 3 and Dr. Pope in his Tiruvasagam has also interpreted it on Page 222. In both the translations the meaning is clearly stated though the witchery of the poetry cannot be conveyed in the translation.

[1]"Like the rising sun that drives away the gloom, The Sun of Mercy riseth to-day within my heart. Ah! I've pierced with my inner eye, Thy true nature and ceaselessly ponder there is naught else beside Thee. My sense of unreality wears little by little. As nearer and nearer I draw, till I am one with Thee. Siva, Dweller in the Great Holy Shrine - In no object in the Universe art Thou fully seen, and yet in all objects, Thou art manifest. Who can know Thee?

The soul was embedded in darkness; then the ray of light from the sun of Mercy - God-Guru - entered. As ignorance wanes before the light of God, the soul perceives the Pure Intelligence and there is no conscious differentiation of subject and object." Till at

1. Vide :— Svetasvatara Upanishad Mantra 16 ;- "Surely is He the Guardian of all, in every creature hid; in whom the seers of Brahm, powers divine are (all) conjoined. Thus knowing Him one cuts the bonds of Death. Him knowing (in his form, benign Siva) in every creature hid, though one, yet all embracing, knowing Him God, from every bond one is free." Mantra 20 "Smaller than small, yet greater than great in the heart of these creature God doth repose. That free from desire he sees with his grief gone by His Grace."

last it loses its differentiating consciousness or impure intelligence and becomes *one* with the untarnished glory of the Lord. There will then be no first person (தன்மை) addressed upon by the second person (முன்னிலை) a state of eternal bliss, where distinctions of consciousness are no more felt. The Lord and the Atma exist in this state of everlasting union 'and bliss where the Pure Intelligence, Sat, has drawn the *satasat* impure Intelligence, into its own, making it shed off its impurity that has been the cause of its separation and differentiation. Vide Tirumular's Tirumantiram - First Tantra No. 8 'கந்தனுறு செம்பொன்.' If one fixes God in the light engendered in himself by concentration of attention inwards and adores Him in that condition and then desires for His Grace, the Lord will grant his desires, being in himself. Every blind man's heart's desire is to regain his eye sight but supposing he regained his eye sight, will the darkness be removed, which formerly pressed on his eye. Not, surely, unless the Glorious sun (God) deigns to show to him in His Supreme Mercy (அவனருளாலே அவன்றாள் வணங்கி). And the sun is of course of no use to the blind so long as his blindness lasted. So he has to realise himself by 'இருவினையொப்பு' (being balanced in pleasure and pain) and 'மலபரிபாகம்' (removal of his egoism) and to realise his maker, till now hid in his heart. And people have asked and will ask always whether there is pleasure from this passage from bondage to freedom. And Saint Manikkavasagar asks us to consider the case of the blindman passing from darkness to sudden light - will there be pleasure or not? Did it ever matter to the sun, in any whit when it was hid from the blindman and now when it shines fully on his newly opened eyes?

Stanza 395 is full of associations with the poetry of the Alwars. In Tiruvaimoli, Nammalwar has a memorable passage in his second cants, third and fourth[1] stanzas, which echoes Manikkavasagar's verse:

> Matchless, all pervading light, my Splendour,
> That gives me bliss - My Kith and Kin who
> are they? (395)[2]

Tirumalai of Tondaradippodi Alwar has a stanza in the same strain:[3]

Thus all the pilgrims of Eternity who are absorbed in the divine light, feel themselves estranged from the world where they become sojourners hastening to the city of God:

In stanza 396, the poet argues thus:-

> ' Oh form of Splendour, Ocean of Bliss
> Having given the refuge of Thy Feet (Grace)
> How can you ever leave me now?

In the last stanza, the poet delineates the highest stage of experience. It ripples with the ecstatic bliss of the child of God who is bathed in the effulgent radiance of the divine splendour and who could behold that ineffable sun of Glory and ask him directly " *தந்ததுன் தன்னைக்கொண்ட தென்றன்னைச் சங்கராயார் கொலோ சதுரர்?* "

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1. *என தாவியுள் கலந்த பெருநல்லுதவிக்கைமாறு*
   *எனதாவி தந்தொழிந்தேன் ...எனதாவியார்?*
   *தந்த நீ கொண்டாக்கினையே (திருவாய் 2. 3, 4)*
2. *யாருற வெனக்கிங் காரய லுள்ளார்*
   *ஆனந்த மாக்குமென் சோதி* (395)
3. *ஊரிலேன் காணியில்லை உறவுமற்றொருவரில்லை*
   *பாரில் நின் பாதமூலம் பரமமூர்த்தி (திருமாலை 29)*

Here is the strain of the sweetest song on earth and the spell of Tiruvasagam is embalmed in this last stanza: (397)

> Thou gavest Thyself to me and Thou didst take me
> Supreme Lord! Tell me whose gains are more?
> Everlasting Bliss have I scored; What hast Thou from me?
> Oh Lord, who art enshrined in pure hearts
> Siva, dweller in the great holy shrines
> My Sovereign Father! Thou camest to abide with me
> For which I have naught to give Thee in return.

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## 23. செத்திலாப்பத்து: ODE TO DEJECTION.

*Place:* Tirup Perunthurai

*Quintessence:* Sivananda's Bliss beyond assimilation.

From the pinnacle of the highest experience in "The Psalm of the house of God", the poet steps down to the realisation that he is still an actor on earth. A man of God's life is punctuated by feelings of ecstasy and grief in alternation. The last poem was sung in Thillai, revelling in the joy of Advaitic Union and this is followed by the Ode to Dejection at Tirupperunthurai. In the "Psychology of the Religious Life", Stratton[1]

1. Vide Stratton - Psychology of the Religious Life - Chap I Expressions of the sense of conflict.

has an interesting chapter dealing with the conflicts in regard to feeling and emotion where he states that the "self-depreciating is as real as the self-glorifying".

Joy that is circumscribed by space or time is fraught with pain and the poet recalls how after the enjoyment of Siva's bliss, he felt forsaken by Him at Tirup Perunthurai when He and His followers departed.

'செத்திலேன் அந்தோ' is the refrain. Why does he long to die? Of what use is this life, if one has lost one's inner purpose?

> 'விழித்திருந் துள்ளக் கருத்தினை இழந்தேன் செய்
> வகை அறியேன்' (398).

The God-Guru condescended to reveal to him His light of Grace for which hoary sages have pined for, and mastered him by the holy word "என்னையோர் வார்த்தை யுட்படுத்துப் பற்றினாய்" (399) and yet my lack-love self wanders here aimlessly 'இன்னும் திரிதருகின்றேன்'.

His conceit and insubordinate pride were responsible for his sense of desolate remorse. Indirectly he exhorts the apostles of God to be humble and meek and efface arrogance "புரிதலுங் களித்துத் தலையினால் நடந்தேன்" (400).

Sorrow mingles with remorse when he asks God why he ever came into his life and changed his even tenor? "இங்கென்னை யெற்றினுக் காண்டாய்" (401). Even when He drew him, He knew of his hard-heartedness and rigid nature. "My heart is rugged: eyes are wooden and ears moulded in iron". What shall I do?

"Show me Thy ceaseless grace,
Show me Thy gracious feet,
And destroy my illusions of the Flesh "[1] (402).

In this strain, the poet bids the Lord show him the open way to Truth. "Is it meet, I weep, being cut away from you?" 'சேயனாகி நின்றலறுவ தழகோ' (404).

The Guru reminds him that He is always near His loved ones. The poet answers thus:-

"Thou called me tenderly and showed Thy true nature;
Consecrated me to serve Thee but permittest not
That I should join the holy company.
I feel confused sorely, Healer of my Grief
Dost Thou Delight in seeing me suffer thus?" (405).

In stanza 407, the poet is in a reminiscential mood. When he was not ready to receive his tender grace, the Lord took pity on him and by His word[2] saved him from the fear of existence, and gave him the nectar of love and mercy. After that, instead of melting in felicity, he found himself intoxicated with excessive exuberance and pride. Here the poet is like a man who had lost a pearl of great price. Memory of having possessed it once, only accentuates the distress, and

1. ...உனைப்பிரிவுறா அருளைக்
காட்டித் தேவநின் கழலிணை காட்டிக்
காய மாயத்தைக் கழிந்தருள் செய்யாய்

2. என்னைக் கோதுமாட்டி நின்குரை கழல் காட்டிக்
குறிக்கொள் கென்றுநின் தொண்டரிற் கூட்டாய்
யாது செய்வதென் றிருந்தனன் மருந்தே
அடியனேன் இடர்ப்படுவதும் இனிதோ (405)

we find the poet seeking high and low for that lustious light that has gone from his ken, with despair and disgust. After the delightful ecstasy of experience, comes this sense of disillusionment that the vision of God has vanished all too soon. Frustration in life is the ruling mood. 'களிப்பெலாமிகக் கலங்கிடுகின்றேன் (407. 40). On this same step stood Nammalvar when he exclaimed in the last line of the last stanza " கயிலை மாமலை மேவிய கடலே " "O Sea (of Grace) whose waters repose on Kailas' lofty Peak." It evokes the peace of God by a restful imagery; the 'fevered groans' of the poet find repose on the calm abode of the Lord.[1]

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## 24. அடைக்கலப் பத்து: ODE ON REFUGE.

*Place:* Tirup Perunthurai

*Quintessence:* Attainment of Maturity.

The poet places himself,all that he is, his imperfections, his ignorance, his insignificance at the feet of his magnanimous Lord, pleading with Him for His sweet shelter. At the end of the last ode, the Lord must have beckoned him, from the majesty of Mount Kailas, to come to Him and not shudder with lonely disgust to end his life. The poet answers this silent call in this lyric on Refuge—"அடியேனுன் அடைக்கலமே" "I seek refuge at Thy Feet".

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1. Of Mathew Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum's" closing stanza where the fierce battle scenes and conflicting passions of the father and son close on the sight of the peaceful Ozus river flowing by.

The poet reiterates the disturbing influences that women exert over him and how their gravitation pulls him so that he begs forgiveness; என்பிழைக்கிரங்கும். Like the shuttle that keeps moving to and fro in the process of weaving, his mind too wanders restlessly. His safety lies in taking refuge in God, though he admits that he does not know the proper approach; உன்னை வந்திப்பதோர் நெறியறியேன் நின்னையே யறியேன் நின்னையே அறியும் அறிவறியேன், "To woo Thee, I do not know, nor even have the knowledge to know Thee aright". (416)

The last stanza reads very much like prose and words rise and fall with potent magic measures. The poet's spirit is caught up in the same throes as those of Othello just before smothering Desdemona and prose and poetry give way under the power of emotion. Shakespear's tragic hero uttered "Put out the light and then put out the light," and Manikkavasagar uttered "விழுங்குகின்றேன் விக்கினேன் வினையேன் என் விதி யின்மையால்" "Give me water to sip and save me." Why was he choked ? Hear his melodious plaint.

> "Eager to taste Thy nectar, so freely given to Thy beloved ones.
>
> I took heapful and swallowed it. It was my fate I should choke. So Give me Thy refreshing waters and save me-Thou my Refuge. 417

Such exquisite play of emotions is found in the Alwars' songs too, where this idea of "Saran" or "Refuge" is developed more fully. Nammalvar has a memorable stanza in the Second Canto, Section 9 of Tiruvaimoli, that echoes the same sentiment expressed

by Manikkavasagar in the last verse of his Ode on Refuge:

‘எக்காலத்திலும் யாதொன்றும் வேண்டேன்
மிக்கார் வேதமலர் விழுங்கும் என்
அக்காரக் கனியே! உன்னையானே’ (St. 8)

Again in the last verse of the 10th Canto of the same author occurs these poignant lines on the Soul's hunger for God's love and shelter.

‘தீர இரும் புண்ட நீரதுபோலே என்னுருயிரை
ஆரப்பருக எனக்கு ஆராவதானாயே’

This idea of drawing solace from the Lord who is the cause of their love, joy, pain, hunger, and sorrow, is the greatest message conveyed by the Alwar Poets in their "Divya Prabantham" (திவ்வியப்பிரபந்தம்) odes. The only panacea against the ills of man is the balm of Refuge சரண்புகுதல்--துவைதம். Manikkavasagar and Nammalwar translated their faith into melodious poesy: Sang the poet of Tiruvasagam:

நின்னையே அறியும் அறிவறியேன் உடையாய்
அடியேனுன் அடைக்கலமே (416)

Sang Nammalwar:

புகலொன்றிலா அடியேன் உன்னடிக் கீழ்
அமர்ந்து புகுந்தேனே 10–10 (திருவாய்மொழி)

Why do these fragments haunt one's memory and give one the kind of vague nostalgia as perfume from a champak flower? Because of the incantation of music, poesy and religious faith, rising as one in a flame of consciousness, it has the power of establishing relations between beauty of the most diverse sorts.

## 25. ஆசைப்பத்து : ODE TO LOVE.

*Place* : Tirupperunthurai.

*Quintessence* : Lakshana of the Soul in Love: The essence of Devotion, distilled from the purest fountains of love.

Wave after wave of emotional fervour follows one another in rapid succession, from the centre of the " Psalm of the House of God " (கோயிற்றிருப்பதிகம்) and these billows break on the shores of our hearts. Form and content of poetry vanish at the touch of the incomparable melody of emotions. The surging feelings of the poet percolate every fibre of our being and tingle with their ebb and flow. We get into the realm of pure poesy as contain intimations of a consciousness wider and deeper than the normal. From now onwards, we know the poet is on the basement of Eternity and we follow him from afar, and glimpse into the ken beyond, with mute awe and holy prayer.

He has loved many things in life. Our poet like Goethe tested the sweets of life, one by one, fame, wealth, learning, delights of the mind and body and found them all bitter. Finally he came to love the most sublime object - the Master whom he saw at Tirupperunthurai - then his yearning to reach Him knows no bounds. From seeking (the cheering refuge) of the Lord in the last canto, the poet passes on to crave for love.

The 'Asai Pathu' or 'Ode to love' is the outcome in unfetterd self-expression of a need in the poet's heart. In the first two lines of each stanza, the poet describes the psychology of his feelings and in the last

two lines of each verse, he strings the pearls of his innermost desires, and thus weaves a unique garland of love - a noble offering to his Beloved Lord under whom he has sought Refuge.

My flawless Gem : I yearn—

418 That Thou mayest free me from darkness and call me to Thee.

419 That I may see Thee, my Honey, incomprehensible to many, My father! அப்பா காண ஆசைப் பட்டேன்.

420 That Thou may look at me, my face, awhile and take pity on me. சிறிதென்முக நோக்கி, ஆவா என்ன ஆசைப்பட்டேன்.

421 That I may see Thy Radiance and hold on for ever to Thy blest feet of Mercy.

422 That my Nectar Sweet, be moved to tenderness by my state.

423 That the light of Thy Face, Thy sweet smile, I may see, My father. "முகவொளி நோக்கி முறுவல் நகை காண அத்தா சால ஆசைப் பட்டேன் கண்டாய் அம்மானே"

424 That I may magnify Thy name in a thousand ways and praise Thee. The soul's movement should be in consonence with His sweet will of the Lord who receives the praises of His Devotees. Vide Nammalwar. 751.[1]

1. திருவாய் மொழி 751, expresses the need he felt to sing praises to his Lord:
"அன்றைக் கன்றென்னைத் தன்னாக்கி யென்னாற்றன்னை
இன்றமிழ் பாடிய ஈசனை யாதியாய்
நின்ற வென்சோதியை யென் சொல்லி நிற்பேனோ"

Thus, He asks God that He may fulfil these intense yearnings. In the remaining stanzas, he pledges his tribute of gratitude, should God grant him his cherished longings.

425 This is the poet's answer to the Lord's question : 'What wilt Thou do, if I give all?' Which is implied in the poetry. I yearn to raise my hands in prayer to Thee ; to clasp Thy Holy feet ; to call on Thy name and melt like wax before the flame incessantly calling out to my Beloved Father.'

426 Then, I shall cast off this body, to enter the celestial city of Siva pura, to behold the effulgent Glory, and with joyful glee shall I behold the society of Thy true friends!

427 I yearn to hear Thee say with Thy beauteous lips, "Fear not," that assurance of love which alone can set my soul at peace.

The subdivision of the poem which illustrates the state of the poet's mind, is an apology, a reason, for the overpowering force of his yearnings. By his disparaging attitude to his body, the poet conveys his desire to crush the desires of the flesh. The desire to be in tune with the Infinite urges him to cut off all his desires to the world. He will not tarry any longer on earth; 'கூவிக்கொள்ளாய் கோவேயோ.' In a simple simile, he gives us a peep into his life before his consecration. He moved in the world like the tamàrind pulp in its shell,[1] without being contaminated, till the Guru appeared and taught him the ways of Grace:

1. அடியேனுடையயாக்கை புளியம்பழமொத்திருந்தேன்.

'சேவடி யென்னும் பொருளைத் தந்திங் கென்னையாண்ட'. He revolted against the body which he called "the house of filth" (அழுக்கொடு திரியும் சிறுகுடிலிது சிதைய 420) and against existence (423). This world was a place where "comings and goings" were the rule, and he could never find solace[1] in life, from the fleeting joys of sex. He brings out his struggle with life in accents of beauty and pathos: 'நானோர் துணை காணேன்.' So he calls to His Father அப்பா (419), ஐயா (425) to receive him to the bliss of "Mukti" from where there is no return. The poet expresses his two-fold desires (1) the yearning of the finite for the infinite bliss and (2) the urgency of the soul to free itself from the trammels of the world - which become welded into a perfect lyric of love. Tayumanavar in his 'காண்பேனோ என் கண்ணி' comes nearest our poet in the magnetic, irresistible calls on the Supreme father and Guru. The yearning of the soul to see Him, visibly, directly, in the manifested form, is resounded in stanza 31.

ஆசையறக் காணேன்
இறையின் கருணை பெறக் காண்பேனோ

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## 26. அதிசயப்பத்து: ODE TO WONDER.

*Place:* Tirup Perunthurai.

*Quintessence:* The Beauty of Release or Mukti.

Wonder is one of the rarest qualities of poetry. Poets revel in the elusive charms of novelty, wherever they find it. Manikkavasagar's poetry teems with the element of wonder at the miraculous conversion

1. Vide Sivagnanabotham, 'birth and death'—போக்கு வரவு

wrought on the poet by the Grace of the Lord. Blake's poetry loved to "see a world in a grain of sand." Tiruvalluvar's kural sought is it "Dharma Artha, Kama and Moksha," Kambar's Ramayana was saturated with the wonders of Nature and man and Wordsworth found it by the wayside, in the simple objects of life like the cloud the rainbow or the ice. These gave him thoughts far too deep for tears.

In this wonder lyric, the poet exposes the degrading attitudes, vanities and pursuit of the base joys of life and eulogises on the wonder of the overflowing love of God, who blotted out all his imperfections and gave him a new lease of life with His chosen devotees. "I neither joined the company of the wise nor meditated on the Holy Lord. I did not pursue the good. Yet my Father saved me from committing my earthly frame to the earth, by taking me into His August fold.

*மண்ணிலே பிறந் திறந்துமண் ணுவதற் கொருப்படு கின்றேனை*
*அண்ணல் ஆண்டுதன் அடியரிற் கூட்டிய அதிசயங் கண்டாமே*

(*433*)

There is a series of effective contrasting issues, one of the favourite arts of poetic workmanship. The poet's depravity is contrasted with the sublime beauty of the Lord as is brought out in the following lines where the skilful use of epithets heighten the effect.

*பொத்தை யூன்சுவர்ப் புழுப்பொதிந் துளுத்தசும்*
*பொழுகிய பொய்க்கூரை...*
*முத்து மாமணி மாணிக்க வயிரத்த பவளத்தின் முழுச்சோதி*

(*434*)

"I reeled in the polluted, corruptibls fleshy body...
Yet my precious pearl, dazzling brilliance of lustrous gems, made me "His" and joined me with the saints."

His pursuit of the fleeting unrealities is pitched against the everlasting gifts of truth of the Lord. This stanza (435) expresses in a novel manner, the life history of our Poet. He approaches his experiences from different angles of vision and every time, he portrayed the selfsame event. He gave it a wondrous vesture and sought a hidden wonder hitherto unexpressed. Thereby his communication never fails to surprise us. The gradual development of the Lord's initiation of him and His relationship with him are suggested in the words 'நீக்கி, நோக்கி, தூக்கி, ஆக்கி in stanza 435: This is the miracle.

The Lord caused me to take human birth ;
He wiped off my falsehood—Oh wonder !
He looked on me tenderly—Oh wonder.
He lifted me from the depths of darkness to the
heights of truth—Oh wonder !

Finally he consecrated me and took me into His Holy choir ! Thus in the four suggestive "causative verbs," the poet condenses his life history and the wonder of it too.

In the 436th stanza, the poet dwells on the wonder of the curious relationship of the Lord with the Universe and the soul of Man–Poetry meets Philosophy:

'உற்ற ஆக்கையின் உறுபொருள் நறுமலர் எழுதரு
நாற்றம்போல்
பற்றலாவதோர் நிலையிலாப் பரம்பொருள்' (436)

He is transcendant in that He does not attach Himself to anything, and immanent in the objects of the Universe, the light of Man's Existence, like the all-permeating fragrance of the flower that wafts its

sweetness everywhere, without fixing on any object whatsoever. This wonder of wonders, is expressed by the Poet by means of the simile, succint with beauty and truth.

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## 27. புணர்ச்சிப்பத்து : THE SONG OF MYSTIC UNION

*Place :* Tirup Perunthurai.

*Quintessence :* The Experience of Advaitha.

This poem is an expression of the Poet's quest : 'என் பொல்லா மணியைப் புணர்ந்தே' and belongs to the class of mystical poetry. "The special form assumed by the consciousness of the mystic is the perception of an eternal principle with which the soul of man desires alliance," says Prof. Hamilton Thompson in his Essay on 'The Mystical Element in English Poetry"[1]

Manikkavasagar gives no symbols but clothes his ideas in plain language, and reveals the nature of the relationship between the human and the divine, and exercises a singular spell on the readers of this poem.

The wonder of God-realisation in the previous Ode leads to the climax of consummation or the Union in Advaita in this Ode. The question is asked : When shall the soul sing, dance, dwell, cajole, caress, embrace, adorn, love, know and enjoy the union with the Grace (feet) of the Lord ?, in the last couplet of each verse. The answer to these questions is the picture of the Poet in different stages of relationship with his Lord.

1. Vide Essays and Studies Vol. VIII Article cn "The Mystical Element in English Poetry" By Hamilton Thompson.

"He came of his own" "விரும்பிலேனை ஆண்டுகொண்ட." He claimed his service. Then he parted: பிரிந்து போந்து பெருமா நிலத்தில் (443). Oh! the agony of the withdrawal! Tears stream from the eyes, gush from the heart and my frame shivers with the thrills of love[1] as I gaze at the matchless, sovereign Lord. My voice falters, hands clasp adoringly and my flower offerings await to deck Thy feet.[2] Such are the expressions of love, that binds him to the Lord.

....பாடிப் பாடிப் பணிந்து பாதப்
பூம்போதனை வ தென்று கொலோ' (447)

In this lyric on Advaita, we see the Poet implying the existence of himself – the soul and the Lord, and his ideal of relationship between the two of them. This is the highest quest in life, the worthiest pursuit of a Poet – Philospher. By means of his poetry, he expounds the nature of this relation as one in which an identity is perceived and a difference is also felt. 'தன்னைத்தந்த என்னாரமுதை' (438); 'உகந்தன்பாய்ப் புரிந்து நிற்பதென்று' (443). It is unity or identity in duality and the poet expresses this truth of the Siddhantin in crystallised poetry. When the soul is in the highest union with Siva, then the soul is not conscious of its separateness and individuality and distinction from God. 'சார்ந்ததன் வண்ண மாதல்.' This blessedness is delineated in stanza 445 and distinction from God.[3]

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1. சொரிந்த கண்ணீர் சொரிய உள்நீர்
உரோமம் சிலிர்ப்ப உகந்தன்பாய் (443)

2. ... ... தழைத்துத் தழுத்த கண்டாய்
களையக்கண்ணீர் அருவி பாயக்கையுங் கூப்பிக்கடிமலரால்

3. Vide Siva Gana Botham sutra: 3 and 4 and 6

Whether sitting, standing, lying, waking,
In laughter or tears, in praise or worship
Whether dancing in different poses
The soul melts for ever in dissolving love,
Seeing that holy form, beauteous like sunset.
With such rapturous thrill, when shall I become
Thine – in Oneness mingled – say when ?
In mystic union with my peerless gem.

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## 28. வாழாப்பத்து : A FAREWELL ODE.

*Place:* Tirupperunthurai.

*Quintessence:* The way to Release.

The shortest, nay the quickest way to attain the feet of the flawless Gem, is to bid adieu to the burthen of existence, on earth : 'வார்கடல் உலகில் வாழ்கிலேன் கண்டாய்.' Then the great call from the Master will come. In the second line of each verse is repeated the haunting refrain, "To none will I cling but Thee:" "பற்று நான் மற்றிலேன் கண்டாய்." Here the idea of attachment to god is stressed but when the refrain alternates with 'மற்றுநான் பற்றிலேன் கண்டாய்' the emphasis is shifted to the determination not to cling to any one else. This intriguing rhythm pattern with the mellifluous call at the end of each stanza "Call me

1. நெக்கு நெக்குள் உருகியுருகி நின்றும் இருந்தும் கிடந்தும் எழுந்தும்
நக்கும் அழுதும் தொழுதும் வாழ்த்தி நானா விதத்தால் கூத்தும் நவிற்றிச்
செக்கர் போலுந் திருமேனிதிகழ நோக்கிச் சிலிர் சிலிர்த்துப்
புக்குநிற்பதென்று கொலோ என் பொல்லா மணியைப் புணர்ந்தே (445)

to Thee - in grace" வருகவென்றருள்புரியாயே conjures a feeling of reverie. The poet sinks into a trance of listless apathy and helplessness.

தேடி நீ ஆண்டாய்...
ஊடுவதுன்னோடுவப்பதும் உன்னை உணர்த்துவதுனக்
வாடினேன் (450) [கெனக்குறுதி

'I raise my complaints against Thee... I love Thee so well. Thy duty is to guide and strengthen me...I faint.'

In 452nd stanza, his act of surrendering his thoughts, actions and senses, brings out the magnitude of his joyless existence. Lisping words of love and trust bring the "Farewell Hymn" to a close.

"Shall I bow down? Hail any one else?
Will I look to them for guidance? Speak thou![1]"

The vital spark of heavenly flame - man's unconquerable love for the supreme Beloved - beautifies this ode which breathes not of weak pessimism but of abiding trust in the reign of Grace

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## 29. அருட்பத்து: ODE ON GRACE.

*Place:* Tirup Perunthurai.

*Quintessence:* Purification of the Soul from Delusion.

The ode on 'Grace' is the direct outcome of the poet's urge to bid adieu to the joyless life and enter the bliss Mukti. The gist of the lyric is contained in

1. தொழுவனோ பிறரைத் துதிப்பனோ எனக்கோர்
துணையென நினைவனோ சொல்லாய்

the refrain 'அடியேன் ஆதரித்தழைத்தால் அதெந்துவே என்றருளாயே' "If Thy servant calls on Thee, assure him Thy comfort mercifully."

The quality of the poem is mediocre and the major portion of the ode is in the form of an invocation to God. 'பேராயிரம் பரவித்திரிந்து எம்பெருமானென ஏத்த' (*424*) "Calling Him by a thousand names, till He hearkens to our cries and needs." Man cannot see God by his own efforts, even if he searches the worlds: 'உலகெலாந் தேடியும் காணேன்' (*459*). But He is the essence sweet of those who love Him truly.

உன்னை உள்குவார் மனத்தின்
உறுசுவையளிக்கும் ஆரமுதே (*463*)

Man must love and God will grant Grace. This is the central teaching of the Saiva Siddhanta and the Universal message of Tiruvasagam. In stanza 465, this idea is stated. "Whoever offers fresh blown flowers at His Feet with devotion, He will gain His divine grace." The Guru's cheerful assurance to his loving devotee closes this lyric:

"From the sea of life, come hither to me.
This is the way to the celestial city.
Go apace and fare thee well." (467–39–40)

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## 30. திருக்கழுக்குன்றப்பதிகம்: TIRUKKALUKKUNRAM.

*Place*: Tirukkalukkunram.

*Quintessence*: The vision of the Guru.

The poet refers to the "dharsan" – vision – of the Guru at Mount Tirukkalukkunram. 'வந்து காட்டினாய்

கழுக்குன்றிலே.' In this Ode, the poet uses uncommon and archaic words with rare effect; "சழக்கனேன் உனைச்சார்ந்திலேன்"...'உனக்கிலாதோர் வித்து'. When he was perplexed, the Lord turned his tears to joy. This alluded to the initiation at Perunthurai. Later, 'his mind gave in to temptations and he swerved from the path, so that once again, he feels stranded with no proper place to imprint His sacred Feet,' implying that God will not bide in the impure heart (470). By using a terminology applied to the life of the fishes as 'மலங்கினேன், விலங்கினேன் கலங்கினேன்' the poet evokes by association the pitiable condition of the poet who is like the fish living in changed waters. 'மலங்கினேன் கண்ணின் நீரை மாற்றி.'

In stanza 471 occurs the reference of the poet to his early drifting on the sea of life when he sighted the life boat of the Guru and entered it. What strange happiness he felt when the Guru appeared to him! 'நானுனை நச்சி நச்சிட' (*472*). The Lords Grace did not fail him. He came to him when longed for Him most. The poet may have had in mind, the derision of the world, when he disappointed the Pandya king to espouse the ascetic life. 'ஏதமே பலபேச நீயெனை ஏதிலார்முனம் என் செய்தாய்.' Before the scornful world, the Lord gave him succour, when he appealed to Him for mercy or Death:

> சாதல் சாதல் பொல்லாமையற்ற தனிச்சரண்
> சரணெனக்
> காதலால் உனை ஓத நீவந்து காட்டினாய் (*473*)

It is true that he did such immense good to me but by taking away the holy companionship of the saints, He has depressed me again; "எனக், கயக்க வைத்தடியார்முனே."

In this ode, there is less of poetic style and more of the autobiographical communication of the manifestation of the Guru on this sacred Mounts. From Ode to Dejection (செத்திலாப்பத்து) to the Ode on grace (29) (அருட்பத்து) we have a unit of emotive experience of the poet, with Tirupperunthurai as the centre of his conflicts. He successfully combated against the powers of the world and swayed on the rocking passions of desire, hate, karuna or pity, wonder grace and joy, and the Guru appeared to him at Tirukkalukkunram as it were to crown him with a laurel of victory for proving so faithful, amidst the storms of life.

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31. கண்டபத்து: ODE TO THILLAI - PRELUDE.

*Place:* Thillai.

*Quintessence:* Vision at Thillai's Temple.

In lyric 2 (கீர்த்தித் திருவகவல்) line 128, the poet explicitly described the order of his Guru to stay on and reach Thillai. The road to Thillai had been strewn with thorns and flowers, and eventually, the poet comes to Thillai and is face to face with his sovereign Lord. In this lyric where the kochaga kalippa metre is most appropriate to convey his jubilant feelings, the poet communicates three phases of his joy. (1) The reminiscenses of his past, in glorious life and the joy of triumphing over it, in the first two lines of each verse. (2) The significance of his illumination by the Guru and the refreshing buoyancy of release from thraldom in the third line and (3) the delight of seeing exalted

Thillai, winding the quatrain. Thus in the deft technique of its superb form. its faultless style and nobility of thought, this poem reaches the high water-mark of poetry as in "Tiru Ammanai," the psalm of the House of God and the song of victory (திருப்படை-யாட்சி).

A. His inglorious past life was a theme, the poet loved to dwell on, in every one of his odes in Tiruvasagam. Enslaved by the sense, his was a life, of living death. 'இந்திரிய வயமயங்கி இறப்பதற்கே காரணமாய்' (*475*). Anguish, he suffered in this life, encircled by evil deeds. He was ignorant and dense, whirled in the confusion of caste, creed and existence. He was a victim to age and disease, bound by the ties of kith and kin too. Egoism and delusion ruled him, and tossed in endless vicisitudes, he had the constant dread of the unknown future haunting him. 'அளவிலாப் பாவகத்தால் அழுக்குண்டிங் கறிவின்றி.' (*482*). He did not discriminate between right and wrong or have any definite aim in life. This was the life of man on earth in general, and the life of Manikkavasagar in particular as interpreted in his poem.

B. In working out the process of his illumination, he builds up his ideal of the Unity of life, with the Lord. 'சிந்தைதனைத் தெளிவித்து சிவமாக்கி யெனையாண்ட' (*475*). From the complex diversity of this birth, the soul soars up, after its enlightenment, to the unity of Siva. Grace aids him on his perilous path, and the devotion and love, on his part keep him steady in his pursuit. Filled with a frenzy of love He bound me to His Holy Feet by His strong will. Once like the cow he was tied up, then the Lord gave him to taste immeasurable joy. The cleansing he gave me from the

stains of life, freed me from all afflictions. 'கேதங்கள் கெடுத்தாண்ட கிளரொளியை மரகதத்தை' (484). Liberation! The joy of release! The Liberator holds His mystic dance at Thillai. He, who is the diversity of life and who is beyond the comprehension of the mortals 'பேதங்கள் அனைத்துமாய்ப் பேதமிலாப் பெருமையனை' (484) was the manifested Lord whom the poet saw in the House of Thillai.

C. In Thillai, he saw the Lord of Ananda, who yields endless rapture 'அந்தமிலா ஆனந்தம் அணிகொள் தில்லை கண்டேனே.' He is worshipped by the whole world. The light of perfect wisdom radiates from His beauteous presence, that the sages and Gods too bow to our Lord of Thillai. The Poet's experience of Thillai was the prize of intense yearning after Enlightenment. The Lord of Thillai signifies the highest illumination and the poet perceived it as the source of knowledge, and of the Vedas. The child of 'Siva Jnana' has seen the abode of "Siva Jnanam."

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## THE MYSTICAL ELEMENT IN TIRUVASAGAM.

After singing the lyric on Thillai prelude[1] the poetry of Manikkavasagar becomes more and more mystical. Mysticism is a mode of recognition in which the soul is concerned with pure "awareness". From lyric 32 (பிரார்த்தனைப்பத்து) to the 'Song of victory' (திருப்படையாட்சி) we trace the onward course of the emancipated soul towards the highest stage of eternal bliss which all such souls reach and which is explained

1. கண்டபத்து 31

in Chandogya (V. 10. 4-5) Koushitaki and Prasna Upanishads and poeticised in Tiruvasagam. The mysterious relationship subsisting between the souls and the supreme Lord will in due course be rewarded with eternal bliss and union, as stated in Munduka III. 1-3: "Free from all bonds of transmigration, he attains perfection with the Lord;" and is resounded by Manikkavasagar many a time, as in

I feel no joy in this sea-girt earth
Call me to Thee - in Grace [1] (28. 448. 4)

In every one of the lyrics from lyric 32 (பிரார்த் தனைப்பத்து) "A prayer", Manikkavasagar's poetry consisted of a sinking in rapture, a prayer for consummation and craving for the sole actuality which transcends thought and speech. All great mystic poets went through the stages of all consecrated souls the way of all flesh, the way of all prophets and seers through the sting of purgation blind, on to the sloughs of Despond and Despair, till they were in touch with the Ananda of Bliss. From pleasure to pessimism, ecstasy to gloom, despair to loneliness, Manikkavasagar soars on the wings of his mystic poetry to the House of Joy. An understanding of the general import of Mystical poetry is essential in order to follow the poet in the last phase of his soul's sublime ascent (32 - 51 odes.)

The mind of the poet is filled with eternal forms of Beauty and Perfection[2] which were their materials of thought, their instruments and media of observation.

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1. வார்கடல் உலகில் வாழ்கிலேன் கண்டாய்
வருக என்றருள் புரியாயே।

2. As seen in கண்டபத்து

Mystical literature resorts to the constant employment of musical imagery, as we find in the 'lyric on victory' (திருப்படையாட்சி) St. 641. 1. 25.

> "The pure gem's wordless music then shall yield delight."
> "The reverberating melody of the conch shells shall resound." 642. 1. 29.

The condition of joyous and awakened love to which the mystic passes when his purification is at an end, is to him, the state of song. Manikkavasagar does not *see* reality but he *hears* it, in the lines quoted above. Thought is turned into song and the mind into 'full sweet (Natham) sound' is changed.

Evelyn Underhill in her Chapter on "The characteristics of Mysticism", says that it is entirely a spiritual activity. The business and method of mysticism is *love*. St. Catherine of Genoa said, "I wish not for anything that comes from thee, but only for thee, O sweetest love". Likewise Manikkavasagar also reiterates in moving strains, his great desire to attain union with the Lord. The lyrics on Dedication 33 (குழைத்தபத்து St. 501) and Ode to love (ஆசைப்பத்து 25) and an offering (உயிருண்ணிப்பத்து 34) flow with this intimate and impassioned love of the Absolute.

In its journey towards this union, the poet passes through well marked phases which constitute the mystic way. "One of the marks of the true mystic," says Leuba, "is the tenacious and heroic energy with which he pursues a definite ideal." (Revue philosophique July 1902). "He is" says Pachen in Psychology des Mystiques Chretions (page 14) "the pilgrim of an inward Odyssey."

In every one of the lyrics, treated under this section, the transcendental quality of the 'spiritual spark' becomes predominant,

> இறைதாள் பூண்டேன் புறம்
> போகேன் இனிப்புறம் போக வொட்டேனே
> (32: 512: 25)
> "வாழ்வற வாழ்வித்த மருந்தே" (32: 536: 2)

subduing to its service, those vital powers of love and will which we attribute to the heart. Under the spur of intense love, the whole personality rises in the act of ecstasy, to a level of consciousness at which it becomes aware of a new field of perception. Under this stress of the "loving sight," poetry is stimulated to a new life also, in accordance with the reality which it has beheld.

> Oh, to sink in Bliss,
> Mingling, for ever mingling with Thy grace,
> Melting and with soul swelling, in rhythmic dance!
> In grace, grant such Bliss of sweet union.

Manikkavasagar's poetry deals with the different phases of the mystical life. The awakening of the self to consciousness of Divine reality is described by the poet in many cantos. That the experience is accompanied by intense feelings of joy and exaltation is seen in Tiruccadagam (5. 8. 9. 10.). The soul realises by contrast, its own imperfections, the bondage of existence and the pangs of separation as seen in "The poet's prayer" lyric (நீத்தல் விண்ணப்பம்).

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1. Vide Mysticism by E. Lender hill

Gradually by self surrender, cleansing and stripping by the method of purgation, the soul detaches from the things of the senses. It is in this phase of his poetry that we find him using frequently the despicable terms as "நாயேன், நாயடியேன் etc. and hurling scorn on himself for his thraldom to lust, desire and attachment, as in "No joy in life" வாழாப் பத்து. Thus he moves on to Illumination when he sees visions as at "Tirukkalukkunram" and Thillai (31) கண்டபத்து.

This is followed by the most terrible of all the experiences of the Mystic poets and that is called "the dark night of the soul" a period of psychic fatigue and mental chaos. This phase is delineated in the cantos 32 - 39 from a prayer பிரார்த்தனைப்பத்து to a lament திருப்புலம்பல்.

The senses are not only cleansed and humbled but the self is made to concentrate on the Lord:

> எல்லாம்நீ தேறும் வகை நீ திகைப்பு நீ தீமை நன்மை
> முழுதும் நீவேறோர் பரிசிங் கொன்றில்லை (33 : 500)
> Thou art my all —
> My comfort Thou - My trepidation Thou! My good and ill Thou art —
> None other have I here —

The nature of the purifying process is to annihilate self-hood the adamantine will of man.

> " எனைநானென்பதறியேன் பகல் இரவாலும்
> அறியேன் 34.508
> " Myself," 'I' " Mine " - I know no more!
> " Day and nights recurrence know I not " —

In this thorough purging, the soul is in the throes of desolation and cries out that it is abandoned by the Lord. Even the titles of the Odes: *குழைத்த பத்து (33) உயிருண்ணிப்பத்து (34) பிடித்தபத்து (37)* give us an idea of the spiritual ennui, the agony of the last purge.

> " உன் குரை கழற்கே
> கற்றாவின் மனம்போலக் கசிந்துருகி வேண்டுவனே "
> I' ll seek, as a cow yearns for her calf [*39 : 558*
> So, May my pining soul melt in love : - The Holy lament 558

Then follows a state of transcendent vitality - the unitive life pictured in 40 *குலாப்பத்து* and 41 *அற்புதப் பத்து* and 42 *சென்னிப்பத்து*, satisfies the three aspects of self - knowledge, will and love.

Then we pass on to the true goal of the mystic quest: 'Union with the Lord,' after the soul has undertaken the last journey to God *யாத்திரைப்பத்து* (45). Then his soul is merged in supreme understanding, mystic wisdom. and eternal peace as in *திருப்படையாட்சி (49)*.

In this lyric, we get a vision as over-powering as Dante's final intuition of Reality. The soul in its exalted state is seen stooping down to view the things " of the earth earthy [1] " *செங்கயல் ஒண்கண்மடந்தையர் சிந்தை திளைப்பன ஆகாதே* stripping herself of the insignia of wisdom and power, *எண்ணிலியாகிய சித்திகள் வந்தெனை எய்துவதாகாதே* 639 : *20*. Initiated into the atmosphere of Eternity, and united with the Absolute, the soul "self naughted," becomes pure, plunged in ineffable bliss.

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1. *செங்கயல் ஒண்கண்மடந்தையர் சிந்தை திளைப்பன ஆகாதே*
***642 : 31***

We see that, Manikkavasagar uses the language and imagery of earth in a refined and spiritualised sense, to express those things for which he finds no real equivalent in human speech. It is not his fault if we misunderstand him. Alas, "we lack that strong music in the soul."

Thus, Manikkavasagar stands unrivalled for his transcendental quality of impregnating his poetry with phrases of haunting and undying music: *அடித்தடித்து அக்காரமுன் தீற்றிய அற்புதம் அறியேனே 51: 12.* The choice of words here gives a shape and semblance to the unexpressed or well nigh inexpressible. Their holy strains descend from "Light above Light, Bliss above Bliss."

The essence of the secret attraction of Tiruvasagam lies in its etherealised poetry.

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## 32. *பிரார்த்தனைப் பத்து:* A PRAYER.

*Place:* Tirup Perunthurai.

*Quintessence:* A supplication to enjoy the Bliss of Mukti without a break.

In the form of a tuneful prayer, the lyric gives expression to the realisation of everlasting bliss. *உலவா இன்பச் சுடர் காண்பான், அலந்துபோனேன் அருள் செய்யாய் ஆர்வங்கூர அடியேற்கே (458).* The thirst doth arise from the soul asks a drink divine - the thirst for the purification of the soul from the great delusion and the waters that shall quench it will be from the living fountains of love: *மெய்யன்பை உடையாய் பெற நான் வேண்டுமே (457); சிவனே நின்று தேய்கின்றேன்*

(*492*); *பெறவே வேண்டும் மெய்யன்பு பேரா, ஒழியாப், பிரிவில்லா, மறவா, நினையா, அளவிலா, மாளா, இன்பமா கடலே* (*490*).

Love demands absolute truth. It must be kept stainless and pure. Flowers of humility will beautify its shrine and that of perfect trust and patience as is conveyed in stanza 448. The words *வேண்டும்*, *வேண்டும்.........வேண்டாதொன்றும் வேண்டாது மிக்க அன்பே மேவுதலே* denote the imperative nature of his supplication for love. The prize of love, the poet thought would be his without his asking for it, and he was disappointed, and then he prays that the sword of grace should pierce his gloom. (stanza 490)

Instead of gazing up at the Lord, the poet, like the bamboo, bowed down, his heart hardened. Then he asks the questions, "As a stranger, shall I bemoan?" *அயலார்போல அயர்வேனோ* (*493*) *நின்றுதேய்கின்றேன்* I wane like the moon (492). Love thrills through the poet's fibre, runs through his experiences joyful or painful, destroys his sentimental illusions as to what living means, pierces his cloudy dreams and remorselessly dissects his ideas as seen in the last two stanzas of this lyric. *மதுரக்கனியே மனநெகா நானோர் தோளாச் சுரையொத்தால் நம்பி இத்தால் வாழ்ந்தாயே.*

'My sweetest fruit, if I remain an uncut gourd,
How will that enhance Thy glory?' (494).

In nothing is the strength of love more strikingly shown than in the power it has to change our motives for action and also to create new capacities out of the waste lumber of half formed desires, lukewarm ambitions and unused energies. He contrasts himself *வாடி, வாடி வழியற்றேன்* with the loving saints of

God கூடிக்கூடி உன்னடியார் and prays for the ineffable bliss of communion, "when I can always be one with Thee in love and joy."

"ஊடி ஊடி உடையாயொடு கலந்துள்ளுருகிப் பெருகிநெக்
காடி ஆடி ஆனந்தம் அதுவேயாக அருள் கலந்தே" (495)

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## 33. குழைத்த பத்து: A DEDICATION OF A BRUISED HEART.

*Place:* Tirup Perunthurai.

*Quintessence:* Union (Oneness) in love.

When one moves away from the "Great Protector," then one is in danger of thraldom. The intuitional centre must be at one with the Ananda centre. In this poem, the poet's path is strewn with the pangs of a mystic's purgative. On the grinding stone, the sandalwood disc is revolved relentlessly till the sandalwood paste is formed and then it forms an offering to the Lord. So the title குழைத்த பத்து[1] suggests that the 'love paste' had to be rolled likewise in the heart of the poet. Emotional symbolism become the supreme shaping force within these lyrics.

"Oppressed by sin, Thou will save: (குழைத்தால்)
If I labour hard, is there any hope? (உழைத்தால்)
If I err, wilt Thou forgive? (பிழைத்தால்)
If I call on Thee, wilt Thou withhold
Thy grace? (அழைத்தால்)

Dejection he feels all the more because having tasted sweetness of love once, he was deprived of it

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1. Cf Thomson's 'Hound of Heaven' - 'Heaven and I wept together.

ere long. He longs for the call of service. He could think of no possible returns for the infinite mercies of God. He feels a deadness and numbness of his soul. "உழலைப் பண்ணுவித்திட்டாய்" (499).

The goal to the beloved is by way of entire surrender; the things of the world were excellent as far as they went but when a man had learned they could not give him satisfaction, then to renounce them was the wisest course. Stanza 500 depicts the beauty of such dedication. "My comfort Thou - My trepidation Thou - therefore in my trembling fear should it Thou not comfort me?"[1]

We replace one passion after another, only to cry at last that all is "Vanitas Vanitatum." Therefore all our desires, our riches, love, power, body and soul should be surrendered to Him, not bitterly, reluctantly nay rebelliously but joyfully, as is expressed in stanzas 501 and 502. "Thou art the object of our Desire: Thou grantest our Desires............There was in me a desire for Thee. In Thee a desire for me........... If there is anything that I should desire from Thee, given that will be to desire what Thou desireth."[2] 501.

When the soul is united to Siva in a union of love and receives a light, this is the highest bliss that man

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1. தேறும் வகை நீ திகைப்பும் நீ தீமை நன்மை முழுதும் நீ
... .... உன்னை விரித்துரைக்கில்
... ... திகைத்தால் தேற்ற வேண்டாவோ—500

2, அதுவும் உன்றன் விருப்பன்றே, can be interpreted also as "Even that, will be the desire of Thee" - Vide Pope's Tiruvasagam page 275 where he translates the last line thus ;—
"And if aught else there be that stirs in me Desire,
That too, in sooth, is Thy Desire - is it not so ?" 501.24,25

can ask of the Lord, who is addressed in the last stanza as 'Beauty'. The essence of this lyric is contained in stanza 504 and that remains also the message of Tiruvasagam. The poet saw the unspeakable vision of the Lord and felt enraptured with joy. Day and night, he ponders on this miracle alone. His dilemma is brought out in line 35 of this stanza, "மண்மேல் யாக்கை விடுமாறும் வந்துன் கழற்கே புகு மாறும்". The irresistible desire to end this miserable existence and the irresistible thirst to attain His feet, takes possession of the poet, and the poetry of Tiruvasagam is the solution to this problem.

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34. *உயிருண்ணிப் பத்து:* MY SOUL IS CONSUMED.

*Place:* Tirup Perunthurai.

*Quintessence:* The flame of love.

The surrendered soul stands face to face and radiates the flame of love. When his sins are consumed, there emits this beauteous ray of love. "He entered my heart, mingled with my life and for ever dwells in my soul" கூறுருடல் புகுந்தான், உயிர் கலந்தான் உளம் பிரியான் (507). The poet has clothed this sense of sublime something, deeply interfused in words of exquisite beauty. "I know not who I am; nor the changes of day and night. He who transcends the range of the mind has filled me with love's madness."[1]

The poet was gripped firm in material pleasures. He was a prey to the vultures of the mind but he was

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1. எனை நானென்பதறியேன் பகல் இரவாவதும் அறியேன் மனவாசகங் கடந்தான் எனைமத்தோன் மத்தனுக்கி 508

emancipated from this bondage by "He who destroys the sins of deeds." Is there any like Him? வினைக் கேடரும் உளரோபிறர் (509). The nature of the piercing love of God is described in mystic language. எனதென் பின் புரையுருக்கிப் பிணைத்தான் புகுந்தெல்லே - Love percolated through and through the marrow of his bones, and melted them. This is a dying to sense and self, and having thus tapped the subterranean springs of his own life, he bids all those who seek the treasures of the kingdom of Siva Nagar to come to him (510). Panting and melting, his spirit rushes on like a torrent, hastening to join the Ocean of Bliss. Such sobs and rocking sighs, we hear also in India's greatest mystical poet Nammalvar in the closing cantos of his immortal 'Tiruvaimoli.' Both the poets describe the way of Negation, the way of separation from the supreme Beloved with a melancholy both profound and passionate. Sang the poet of Tiruvasagam: வேண்டேன் மண்ணும், விண்ணும்......பூண்டேன் புறம்போகேன் இனிப்புறம் போகவொட்டேனே (512); எச்சம் அறிவேன் நான் எனக்கிருக்கின்றதை அறியேன்; What I have (and need) I know not; what I lack, I know (514).

"ஆற்றேன் எங்கள் அரனே அருமருந்தே எனதரசே"
"நான் பாவியேன், ஆனால் உனை நல்காய் எனலாமே" 513
"Yea, I am a sinner, yet can I not beseech Thee:"
"Give me Grace?"

Nammalvar sang in the same strain thus:

"போர விட்டிட்டு என்னை நீ புறம்போக்க லுற்றால்
பின்னையான்
ஆரைக் கொண்டு எத்தை யந்தோ!
எனதென்பதென்? யானென்பதென்?
தீர இரும்புண்ட நீரதுபோல என்னாருயிரை
ஆரப்பருக எனக்கு ஆராவமுதானாயே."[1]

1. 35. பத்தாம் பத்து. திருவாய்மொழி.

Thus, in this moving lyric, Manikkavasagar is singing deep 'in the being that has somehow stumbled into that impact with life that begets beauty', singing of the full flood tide of love as it encroaches, invades and finally possesses every corner and cranny of our being.

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## 35. அச்சப்பத்து: THE DECAD OF FEAR.

*Place:* Thillai.

*Quintessence:* Absorption in Ananda.

The muse of poetry reposes in this ode and the seer speaks to us of the shadow of fear that dogs the life of man. The man of God will steer clear of those who worship the false for the true, and shun the ignorant and dread the snares and lures of the world (அம்ம நாம் அஞ்சுமாறே). The pilgrim of God will not fear the unkind cuts of the world or the fury of the elements, so much as those people who lack love, wisdom and understanding towards the Great Father. (516–518)

His steadfast love poured in the last two poems, has strengthened him, that he gets courage to withstand the foes of his Illness, Death, Anger of the great, Scorn and Infamy—these he will not fear but he recoils from those who lack piety, feeling and love to the Lord. In each verse, he recounts those that he will dread and the recurrence of (அஞ்சேன்) 'I fear not!' and (நாம் அஞ்சுமாறே) 'I fear!' evokes the rasa of 'fear and fearlessness' – the harmony of opposites which is a trait of mystical poetry.

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## 36. திருப்பாண்டிப் பதிகம்: LYRIC ON PANDI.

*Place:* Tirup Perunthurai.

*Quintessence:* The growth of Ananda.

The poem on 'fear' leads him to recall the period of Life when he was most subject to fear. This was the time, when after his renunciation, the poet was harassed by the Pandyan King, to make good the money that had been given him to purchase the horses but which he had spent lavishly on charitable deeds. In this ode he alludes to the coming of the Lord as a warrior on a fine charger, leading aray of horses (526. 532). He is filled with gratitude for this noble act of the Lord and he addresses those of weak and wavering faith (தேற்றமிலாதவர் 535) to haste and reach Him. Then they will forget their self glory and be intoxicated with His love (527). The Lord will wage a holy war and confound the foes of those who love Him. Therefore the poet exhorts all to do Him obeisance and be saved: (காலமுண்டாகவே காதல் செய்துய்மின் 530).

Didactic element is preeminent in this ode. Moral teaching belongs certainly to an inferior class of poetry, and poems 35 and 36 lack the inspired realisation that we find in his other poems.

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## 37. பிடித்தபத்து: THE END OF THE PURSUIT OR THE TENACIOUS GRASP.

*Place:* Tirup Perunthurai.

*Quintessence:* Communication of Divine Bliss.

The triumphant end of the long pursuit is sighted. The Lord is the Divine Physician and the pilgrim of Eternity is the patient whose ailments are of diverse nature. He transforms his ailing life on earth and makes possible the life of eternal bliss (வாழ்வற வாழ் வித்த மருந்தே 536). The poet exults in questioning the Lord in ten different attitudes of emotive state:

I cling to Thee:

That I may live............4.
For ever more...........8.
On earth....................12.
In darkest gloom.........14.
Forlorn and weary......20.
In the closing hour of death...24.
Sovereign Lord............28.
Author of Illusion.........32.
Ever shadowing Thee...36.
My bliss ineffable.........40.

To Thee, I hold fast.

This lyric is one of the most popular poems in Tiruvasagam. In its rare poetry, there is the moral profundity of a ripe 'Jnani' and the responsive fervour and innocence of a child. Following the verses, we feel the pulse of their rapture beat between intensity of sensuous vision and its transcendence- "Vision of mazes of beauty whereon who so gazes faints entangled in their mazes!"

The poet's soul is merged in supreme understanding mystic wisdom and Eternal Peace. (அம்மையே அப்பா! உள்ளத்தில் ஒளிர்கின்ற ஒளியே! இறவிலே கண்ட காட்சியே) His object of adoration is every where and yet nowhere (543, 31). He is the rotten fruit and the Lord in the fresh, ripe fruit overflowing with the juice of love.

His soul is consumed in ecstasy as he dwells on the exceeding love of God, the father, the mother and peerless gem.

What has He done to him? He gave him a mighty victory. From a sense of futility, overpowered with the incumbent weight of sinful existence, he was rescued and granted the bliss of Moksha 538.

> My Treasure; Oh Siva Lord
> On earth, I cling to Thee -
> How can'st Thou get away from me now?[1]

Stanza 544 lives in the hearts of old and young - all lovers of Tiruvasagam and there is the high accents of beauty, of sweetness and light in its melodious, dulcet music. " Behold a mother ; Out of the abundance of her love for her child, she remembers to feed her child. With even greater love, the Lord remembers to tend and nurse me. My flesh cries to Him as the child cries for his mother. He feeds me with drops of sweetest manna so that my soul brims with light of

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1. *பொய்ம்மையே பெருக்கிப் பொழுதினைச் சுருக்கும்*
*புழுத்தலைப் புலையனேன் தனக்குச்*
*செம்மையே ஆய சிவபதம் அளித்த*
*செல்வமே சிவ பெருமானே*
*இம்மையே உன்னைச் சிக்கெனப் பிடித்தேன்*
*எங்கெழுந் தருளுவதினியே.* (538)

wisdom and happiness unfailing. Then when I felt full, I started moving away from Him and dodge, but He, like the loving, gentle mother dogged my footsteps and coaxed me to take more, lest I hunger. A delightful chase?

Alas! all of a sudden, my wealth of Bliss vanished. (The mother leaves the child to play and returns to her work. It was the child's turn to pursue the mother).

'I followed Thee and having found Thee, hold fast
to Thee.
Never more can you leave me.[1] 544

"The emotive speech of poetry communicates attitudes interrelated in ways valid for many minds - for all who fulfil certain conditions of apprehension - poetry uses suggestion, multiplying the evocative stimuli brought to bear in each particular instance, that communication may become complete.[2]

The communicated experiences of poetry bear witness to a positive, creative aspect which the figure of a poet or mother may possess within the inner life, mediating to the individual those social values which can be assimilated by his own nature as to the child, the mother stands for all forms of the world's stored

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1. *பால் நினைந்தூட்டும் தாயினும் சாலப்*
*பரிந்து நீ பாவியேனுடைய*
*ஊனினை உருக்கி உள்ளொளி பெருக்கி*
*உலப்பிலா ஆனந்தமாய்*
*தேனினைச் சொரிந்து புறம் புறந்திரிந்த*
*செல்வமே சிவபெருமானே*
*யானுனைத் தொடர்ந்து சிக்கெனப் பிடித்தேன்*
*எங்கெழுந் தருளுவ தினியே.* (544)

2. Archetypal patterss in poetry by Bodkin - Chapter on sacred and contemporary literature. Page 323.

magic, so with the development of the inner life, these figures of the mother and child are charged with that same manna. It is the realisation of such a personal symbol that makes this lyric (பிடித்தபத்து) so entrancing." The mystical attribute, incomprehensible to the man of the world is simplicity to those who have put the world behind them. They have become as little children and the secrets hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed to babes and are the common language of nurseries of heaven.'

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## 38. திருவேசறவு: SACRED SADNESS OR REMINISCENCE.

*Place:* Tirup Perunthurai.

*Quintessence:* Elimination of objective reality.

These lyrics take us into the sublime regions of mystical fervour. 'They are the result not so much of moments of pious mediation snatched from an active life, as of hours of undisturbed contemplation in the night watches and the early dawn spent in visions of that "mighty and eternal light." The poet's soul is no longer the prisoner of his body. In communion with the inextinguishable light of God, it partakes of the essence of the Deity.

The poet recalls once again the manifold acts of Grace which the Lord bestowed on him. (நீவா என்னைக் கண்ணாரை உய்ந்தவா றன்றே உன்கழல்கண்டே 547: 8.

3. Vide Mystical Element in English Poetry by Hamilton Thomson.

அன்பால்நீ அகம்நெகவே புகுந்தருளி ஆட்கொண்ட தென்பாலே நோக்கிய வாறன்றே எம்பெருமானே 552: 27). It was like giving a dog a golden dais 550:27.

He ends the canto thus:-

> "Did I do any rare acts of worship?
> Did I merit to chant the prayer, Sivayaname'
> Like honey, sweet nectar, my sweetest Lord,
> Himself came, stepped into my heart and made me 'His'
> So that this life, this existence, I loathed."[1]

The mystic expresses his sense of the hidden charms of the Lord in a peculiar accent, which is the result of a special intimacy and his language is that of symbolism and analogy.

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## 39. திருப்புலம்பல்: SACRED LAMENT.

*Place:* Tiru Arur.

*Quintessence:* The ripeness of Experience.

The poet will praise none but the Lord, whom he saw and to whom he looks for help. In the last stanza, the ripeness of his experience is conveyed.

> 'I seek no kith or kin: no place, no name I need
> The learned, I desire no more nor knowledge
> Lord of Kuttalam! Thy beauteous feet, I'll seek

1. Cf. Thomson's Hound of Heaven :- How little worthy of any love, Thou art! Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee. Save me, save only me?

Like the mother cow yearning for its calf.[1] 558

It is in the constant search for a peace that transfigures the ordinary emotions and activities of life that a mystic finds the joy of permanent attainment.

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## 40. குலாப்பத்து: ODE TO GOLDEN THILLAI.

*Place:* Thillai.

*Quintessence:* Uninterrupted Mystic Enjoyment.

The poet has attained the calm serenity of the Lord of Thillai. The uninterrupted experience is set forth in this Ode and reminds us of Arnold's prayer:

'Calm soul of all things. Make it mine.
To feel, amid the cities' jar
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar.'

The soul and body in rapture dance before the Lord of Thillai. Stanza 561 conveys the beauty of a pure soul who bereft of sorrows and distinctions of good and bad, is sanctified. At the glowing touch of the Lord of Thillai, past sins are dissolved, present ills effaced and future forebodings eased. The poet is drawn there by the irresistible force of love and learns the wisdom of infinite bliss (561 and 562).

In stanzas 564, and 567 the poet wrapt in mystic contemplation of the Lord of Thillai, summons before

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1. தொண்டரடிப்பொடியாழ்வார்—திருமாலை
"ஊரிலேன் காணியில்லை உறவு மற்றொருவரில்லை
பாரில் நின்பாதமூலம்...பரமமூர்த்தி
காரொளிவண்ணனே, கண்ணனே கதறுகின்றேன்" (29)

him images and analogies which are not the chance creations of fitful moods but abiding possessions. The life of man must be fruitful in each of its stages before old age sets in. The analogy of the bud, flower, fruit and over-ripe fruit is intriguing. A hidden treasure, he said was found in his life which was like the fallow land, alluding to the manifestation of the Guru. Before the illuminating light of Thillai, his poems represent the music overflowing in his soul. Thillai the House of Joy becomes dynamic with the aura of suggestiveness, and of inexhaustible significance for feeling.

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## 41. அற்புதப்பத்து : THE MIRACLE OF DECAD

*Place* : Tirup Perunthurai.

*Quintessence* : The wonder of the Experience.

In poem 26 on "The ode to Wonder" the poet dwells on the superwonder of the Lord's gracious act of including him into the company of the holy saints. The element of surprise is again the major 'rasa' in this ode, but is focussed on the miraculous coming of the God Guru into his life. The experience so portrayed deals with one of the crucial psychological phases of the poet's life. At a time when he least expected His coming, He came! At a time when he was fettered by the chains of carnal delights, obsessed inordinately by the charms of women, He came! At a time, when the cares of the state weighed on him and he regarded the phenomenal as the real, He came! This is the

gist of the whole ode. In stanza 571[1] the poet words out a simile. He was bitten by the snake of 'Egoism' and reeled under its fearful sway. The Lord saw him raving and took him and checked his uncontrollable fits and fed him with the sweetest essence, and thus cured him. The poetic imagery the clear ring of words give a shape and semblance to the unexpressed or well nigh inexpressible. It heightens the value of a concrete image by a stroke, that sets it instantly in sharp relief. We can say that such magnificent similes are the achievements of the shaping spirit of Manikkavasagar's poetry. It is these surprises that the poet gives us which make us forget that the theme is repeated.

The miracle of his experience is simply but strikingly brought out in the last stanza which generally interprets the spirit of a lyric. The God-Guru manifested Himself - when lo, he arose from the embraces of women to find himself in the endearing clasp of Siva - Sakti.[2] (578)

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1: நானெனதெனும் மாயக்கடித்த வாயிலே நின்று கழறியே
திரிவேனைப்பிடித்து...அடித்தடித்து அக்காரமுன் தீற்றிய
அற்புதம் அறியேனே—571
திருவாய்மொழி 2 பத்து 9 : 8 :
மிக்கடல் வேதவிமலர் விழுங்கும் என்
அக்காரக்கனியே! உன்னையானே.

2. ம்ங்கையர் தம்மோடும் பிணைந்து திரிவேனை...
... குணக்கடல் கோமளத்தோடும் கூடி
அணைந்து வந்தெனை ஆண்டு கொண்டருளிய

## 42. சென்னிப்பத்து : THE HEAD-DECAD.

*Place* : Tirup Perunthurai.

*Quintessence* : Revels in Bliss.

A joyful psalm which praises God as Ananda, Beauty, Blissful lover, Truth upon whose flowery feet, our heads shall rest like a ray of light சுடருமே, like a full blown மலருமே, like a lustrous gem திகழுமே. The poet has removed "the unwilling dross that checked his flight" and his diction, figures of speech and imagery have compelled the poem to a form which shall reveal the hidden.

In stanza 581, the poet in the role of a lady love addresses her playmates and informs them how her lover has stolen away her heart, that even her bangles have become loose by her pining, but in spite of that, she has vowed to serve Him and none else. There is a parallel stanza in Tiruvaimoli which describes the hopeless plight of the love-lorn maid, who is Nammalvar himself.[1] He describes the wonderful sight of the God-Guru who came down to earth like a sage at Thirupperunthurai surrounded by *His* devotees.

Amidst ascetics, he made me see His cosmic dance and finally He made my heart, His home, and claimed my services. Such gracious manifestations, He revealed to me who am brimming with sweet showers of His Grace. "காடத்துள்ளமுதூறஊற." In the

1. Cf Alwar. Thiruvaimoli 7 : 2.
கங்குலும் பகலும் கண்துயிலறியாள்
கண்ணநீர் கைகளால் இறைக்கும்
...எங்ஙனே தரிக்கேன் உன்னைவிட்டு என்னும்
இருநிலம் கைதுழாவிருக்கும் இவள் திறத்து என்
செய்கின்றாயோ.

last stanza, he calls on all to join him in praising the Lord and doing Him service (588). The mystic finds great joy in communicating his incommunicable experience and it is this keen perception that gives him the power of putting it with phrases of haunting and undying music.

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## 43. திருவார்த்தை : THE HOLY WORD.

*Place:* Tirup Perunthurai.

*Quintessence:* Understanding Love.

Poetry is at its lowest ebb in this ode, where the poet narrates a number of incidents relating to the manifestations of the Lord's Grace, to His saints and Gods. It gives great joy to the poet to feel that the Lord not only showed mercy on him but on all those who sought His Grace. Allusions are freely drawn from the Puranas and he has strung them together in this ode, which is an instance of narrative poetry. Love is the only way to reach His feet, where there is love Grace will flow; the Divine Presence will be seen, sins forgiven and feelings sublime are aroused.

*காதல் பெருகக் கருணை காட்டித் தன் கழல்*
*காட்டிக் கசிந்துருகக்,*
*கேதங் கெடுத்தென்னை ஆண்டருளும் (597)*

Such understanding love that flows from a man who is in tune with the Infinite, will eliminate all distinctions and lead us to the Mystic Union; *பேதங் கெடுத்தருள் செய்பெருமை (595).* The holy word of Grace through love is preached as the surest means of attainment.

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## 44. எண்ணப்பதிகம்: A REVERIE

*Place:* Thillai.

*Quintessence*: The extinction of Desire (or longing).

The poet expresses his yearnings to join the holy choir and enjoy the bliss of union with his beauteous Lord - the same request is made several times, and is expressed with a renewing technique which can convey exultation of emotion, the poet reminds God of His Promise not to part from him: "*பிரியேன் என்றென் றருளிய அருளும் பொய்யோ?*". Life becomes consuming fire, and from its scorching effects, only His intimacy unrestricted, can save him; "*உயிருண்கின்ற எம்மானே, நண்பே......என்னுயிர் நாதா*" *601: 12*. In one of his exalted moods, the mystic poets speaking the disconcerting language of intimate relationship and addresses the Lord in accents of astounding joy and certainty. There comes a stage when the poet moves in the realm of pure contemplation and forgets the actuality of the senses. Stanza 603 depicts the peculiar state of beatitude:

My eyes see no more Thy Gracious feet  
No adoration raise I from my lips –  
No worship do I perform neither do I cherish  
Thee.  
Self knowledge has gone out of me  
To ponder on Thy holy saints. I've ceased.  
My uneasiness weighs on me like a dead  
weight.  
Even if Thou should'st come to me,  
I should feel bashful to look on Thee[1]. (603)

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1. *நீயினிவரினுங் காணவும் நாணுவனே.*

The mingled feelings of disappointment, unworthiness pitted against the greatness of his cherished objects of love, give rise to this poignant appealing. The last stanza gives an assurance of the certitude of God's infinite mercy and the poet's reconciliation that all things work for good to them that love God.

[1] This lyric deals with the supreme ecstasy of contemplation.

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45. யாத்திரைப் பத்து: THE PILGRIM SONG.

*Place*: Thillai.

*Quintessence*: The psychology of Experience.

The end of the journey of life draws nigh and here begins the pilgrimage of the poet to the city of God. We have followed the poet as a pilgrim of an inward Odyssey and at Thillai, we saw him in a state of illumination.[2] It entailed a vision of the absolute, a sense of the Divine presence but not the true union with it. It is a state of happiness. Once he became "a mode of the infinite[3]; filled with an abounding sense of the divine life, of the adorable reality, he wished to communicate the revelation to all the others and hence his call to "Ye who seek the joyous release," to join him in his last journey that shall take them to the true goal of his quest the union; "போகவேண் காலம் வந்ததுகாண்." Those who are stead fast in their

1. Vide Herbert's Poem: "But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild at every word, Methought I heard one calling. "child" and I replied, "My Lord."
2. Ode to Thillai. 40.
3. Vide Mysticism and Poetry by Brockington.

purpose will never falter: "தளராதிருப்பர் தாந்தாமே" (606). Then follows a warning that selfhood must be annihilated for only then distinctions fade away "யாமார், எமதார், பாசமார் என்னமாயம்?" before the abiding will of the Lord "அவன்தன் குறிப்பே குறிக் கொண்டு." This is one of the constantly reiterated messages of the poet: "கடைக்கொண்டிருமின் திருக் குறிப்பை." This is the lesson that Dantee too learnt from Beatrice after he had scaled through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. "In His will lies our Peace."

In stanza 609, occurs the poetic imagery of the "Caravasseri" "நெருஞ்சத் தோடுடன் போவதற்கே." The poet makes a rousing appeal to leave off wrath and push on e're the gates of Sivapuram are shut[1]. "அடைவோம் நாம்போய் சிவபுரத்துள் அணியார் கத வடையாமே".

The life of the blessed is indeed sweet. The sublime toys of fruition can best be anticipated by chastening the mind with pure thoughts of God and exalting our love for Him·

" In this one line, the poet condenses the glorious consummation that awaits the holy devotees. They shall taste to the full, the nectar of *Grace*, and filled with exceeding love, they shall immerse in the ocean of *bliss*. Hence he repeats the stirring call to leave off confusion and join the band of pilgrims, and gain the enlightenment. To others, who are left behind, "woe, Oh woe, greater woe unto them"

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1. Cf. Tennyson: "*Oh let us in that we may find the light!*
Too late, too late! Ye cannot enter now.

46. திருப்படை யெழுச்சி: THE BATTLE MARCH.

*Place:* Thillai

*Quintessence:* The war against the Universe.

The general (viz. the poet) had in the last ode prepared them for the march. Here the clarion sounds to take up arms against the forces of ignorance. In these two stanzas, poetry resorts to allegory. The holy warriors who are composed of pious devotees loved disciples Yogis and mystic apostles don themselves with the armour of Righteousness, Wisdom, Purity as they charge forward, to the heavenly fortress where illusions[1] hosts cannot enter.

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47 திருவெண்பா: THE HOLY LYRIC.

*Place:* Tirup Perunthurai

*Quintessence:* The nature of liberated souls.

The evolution of Jivan Mukta is traced in the lyric. Ever since the Lord 'pierced him with the arrow of realisation,' the Jivan-Mukta realises the effect of divine mercy as the greatest panacea against the miseries of Life. Then follow the stages of God Realisation (622). The heart is diffused with the light of the shepherd who leads His flock to Mukti from where there is no return: "*என் சிந்தையே யிருத்தன் பெருக்கும் ஒளி.*" The unparallelled gift of His love is the privilege of a holy man of God (624) whose heart is the holy of holies for the Lord. An entrancing picture of a Jivan Mukta is given in stanzas 624 and 627. Behold the transfigured saint of the Lord! The

1. *வேல் மடுத்தேன் சிந்தனைக்கே கேடத்தான்* (*619 : 11*)

poetic form of venba is skilfully adopted to convey the sentiments of dignity, pose, tranquility and beauty which are the hell marks of Jivan Mukta.

> " The Lord of Perunthurai has made my heart
> His abode, and lighted it with Love.
> His light has cut off sorrow's bonds,
> Banished darkness and increased bliss.[1] (627)

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## 48. பண்டாய நான்மறை: THE ANCIENT SCRIPTURE.

*Place:* Tirup Perunthurai

*Quintessence:* Gratitude for the Grace of the Guru.

Who made me a Jivan Mukta? The answer lay in the beautiful nature of the Grace of God who mystifies the scriptures and Gods and the ' bhava ' of gratitude is predominant in this poem. References are freely made to the incident of the Lord riding on a charger and in all probability these two lyrics were conceived on the poet's return to Tirupperunthurai, after relinquishing his ministerial duties, and express the poet's allegiance to the Guru for alleviating his sufferings under the Royal Master in Madura.

He praises the Lord's sacred abode of Tirupperunthurai, the symbol of his liberation, the centre of worship for pious house-holders, saints, sages and Gods. The eyes which behold Him spell delight. He is the goal of man's efforts at Truth and yet surpasseth

1. இன்பம் பெருக்கி இருளகற்றி எஞ்ஞான்றுந்
துன்பந்தொடர் வறுத்துச் சோதியாய்—அன்பமைத்துச்
சீரார் பெருந்துறையான் என்னுடைய சிந்தையே
ஊராகக் கொண்டான் உவந்து 627.

even gem like words. From Swopadesam the poet changes the form and addresses his soul and world alternately.

Thus we see in gem like words of pure poesy our poet strives to dwell on " the flawless gem " and that is Tiruvasagam; " மாசின் மணியின் மணிவார்த்தை ". *634* : *26*.[1]

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49. திருப்படையாட்சி : THE MARSHALLING OF THE SACRED HOST OR THE HOLY VICTORY.

*Place* : Thillai.

*Quintessence* : Adieu to Life's Experiences - Emancipation !

This poem may be said to contain the cream of Tiruvasagam. The soul is purified of all taints of the "three Malas " and has lost the distinctions of 'like and dislike,' 'I and mine'. The soul is transported into bliss at the sight of the Beloved long loved, long sought after, long pined for,[2] and breaks into a rapturous song - this lyric on " The Holy Victory " is like the morning song of a lark that takes to its wing for the first time for its exuberance and unpremeditated art ; and the swan song for its farewell to the world and its experiences. It is both a farewell to the vain deluding joys of life and a welcome of the everlasting bliss of Siva. Philosophy and poetry become frozen as the poet soars on the viewless wings of 'Ecstasy.'

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1. பேசும் பொருளுக் கிலக்கிதமாம் பேச்சிறந்த
மாசின் மணியின் மணிவார்த்தை (634)
2. Cf. St Augustine - Confessions : " Too long I loved Thee Beauty - So old and yet so new...Thou wert within and I without.

Here is a heaven in which many different stars shine. In it shine the intellectual and moral virtues; In it shine all the Lakshana of good poetry instilled by religious faith and those emotions of love and Bhakti; In it shine the heavenly excellencies - the hints and gleams of perfection, that show the depths of the nobility of Tiruvasagam. The intensity of the vision demands the greater act; Look at the soul that has attained perfection - look well is the poet's command.

The delights of the world are recounted and dismissed as dross when compared with the joy of union with Him who is Bliss and the cause of Bliss. The communicated joy is something like the joy that Dante felt after journeying through Hell, purgatory and Paradise, when he saw Beatrice with the "White rose of the Blest," where flows the river of light.

This is the state that Tirumular pictured in Tirumantram, when he said சிவனுக்குள்ளே சிவமணம் பூத்தது. In the blossomed lotus of the Heart of the realised soul, springs up the fragrance of the final and ultimate relation, the impartible parts of the one only Siva who is without a second - Two in one and One in two and yet so attuned as to be one only without a second. C. V. Swaminatha Iyer describes this state of bliss in his article on "My Master's voice," in the 'Light of Truth' Vol. XIII No. 5 thus: "the blossomed Heart of the realised soul alone can realise the fragrance of the ineffable union of சி with வ which seers see and prophets talk in lisping words of living light."

In order to imbibe the poetry and the truths contained in "The Holy victory" psalm திருப்படையாட்சி our heads and hearts must become perfectly

attuned and then we can listen with profit to the outpourings of his soul.

The poet looks back ever his life in the world.[1] In a quieter mood, Tirumular summed up a less varied experience.

"I learnt the object of my union with the body
I learnt of my union with the God of Gods
He entered my heart without leaving me
I learnt the knowledge that *knows no sin*"

Dr. Pope has paid a high tribute to the remarkable rhythmic beauty of this soul - entrancing poem. The intense mystic fervour of the song must make *itself* felt. Each verse contains four lines under one எதுகை. Each of these is divided into two precisely similar halves, which are hexameter dactylic hypercatalectio. Each of these half-lines into quarter lines all the four having the same மோனை.

விளையுஞ் சிவானந்த பூமி...
களையைக் களைந்து பின்படர்ந்தேன்...ஐயன்
களையன்றி வேறொன்றுங் கண்டிலன்.

The poet's farewell to his experience in the world is similar to that of Beatrice who admonishes Dante: "I am made such by God in his grace, that your misery does not touch me; nor the flames of this burning assail me. She expresses the eternal quality that belongs to all liberated souls - the fully presented meaning of his life. Man may yet be in the presence of the Lord and behold under the form of eternity, the

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1. Vide Saiva Siddhantam - article by Prof: K. Subramania Pillai M. A. M. L. Page 311 - Dr. Pope's Tiruvasagam. Cf. Tayumanavar: ஆகாதோ வென்கண்ணி and ஆனந்தக் களிப்பு.

true essence of his life. This complete, yet calmly impersonal even joyful return of experience to the mind, seems the accepted nature of the vision - the poet looking upon his own pain and mortal destiny.

No longer will he be under the haunting influence of the senses, or feel the urgent necessity to search for the light of Truth, through long and arduous paths. The fearful lures of fair damsels, the panic of births shall not affect him. There will be no effort to shun the bad and espouse the good for "good and bad" cease to function in his blessed state of union with the Lord' 635.

The melodious songs and dances, the union of the body with the soul, or of the five elements with the five senses, or of the saints with one another, or the confusion between the right and wrong or even my pursuit to reach the loving feet of the Lord - all these have no significance for the emancipated soul ( எனை ஆளுடை நாயகன் என்னுள் புகுந்திடிலே ) when the great Lord entered my soul. (636)

Fleeting changes, and bonds, no longer matter. Entering the serenity of bliss, united with the absolute Beloved, the soul is in a state of transcendent vitality. "என்னுடைய நாயகனாகிய ஈசன் எதிர்ப்படுமாயிடிலே". No longer do I pine for the indwelling presence of the Lord nor for His light to chase illusions of grief. 637

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1. It is interesting to note the interpretation of Dr. Pope whose translation conveys the idea of affirmation as for example : St. 635 1 ; 2 : "Joy amid joys of damsels beautiful shall cease to lure - shall it not be?" The question, "Shall it not be?" implies the answer It shall be possible."

Of what avail are sweet communions with Him, enjoyment of the Grace, yogic vibrations of music longings to rank first in service or dedication to His Roseate Feet, when my gracious Lord who owns me has arisen within me? From the contemplation of such pure delights, which no longer please Him, he descends to the lower scale and probes into the material pleasures and finds them equally impotent to affect him in his blessedness.

Gone are the states[1] when I clung to the image of the Lord gleaming with Holy ashes, when I offered Him flowers; Distractions by the love of beauteous maids, or the Veena's dulcet melodies, yearnings for the company of His saints as for His Grace are gone! Such thoughts and experiences which held sway over him, vanish when the soul is in mystic union with the Lord (640). It is a master stroke of poetic craftsmanship to set off the good pursuits with the ills in life, like setting off a diamond against a dark background. The last two closing stanzas of this poem are examples of the finest gems of Tamil poetry, noted for its strange exhaltation and wondrous beauty. These contain the touchstones of great poetry, possessing both in style and substance, supreme poetic quality - the

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1. The Kriya of Jnana is the seeking of liberation; the yogi Jnana is the shining light coming from Nadarta and the state of Jnana is the state of denying "I" and "mine." Vide Tirumular : Tirumantram.

ஞானத்தின் ஞாஞுதி நான்குமா ஞானிக்கு
ஞானத்தின் ஞானமே நானென தென்றுமை
ஞானத்தில் யோகமே நாதாந்த நல்லொளி
ஞானக்கிரியையே நன்முத்தி நாடலே (*1474*)

Vide Saivaism in South India pp, 260 by
C. V. Narayana Iyer.

Aristotleian high truth and Platonic beauty. Through the incantation of their music, the following lines seem to gather up all the significance of the poet's experience into a " single flame of consciousness."

*சொல்லியலா தெழுதூமணி யோசை சுவைதரு மாகாதே*
*துண்ணென என்னுளம் மன்னிய சோதி தொடர்ந்தெழு மாகாதே*
*பல்லியல்பாய பரப்பற வந்த பராபர மாகாதே". (641)*

The rapture of wordless, resoundingly sweet music, the joy experience of enjoying uninterruptedly the light of His love within his heart, the sole possession of this unity of truth or gloating in His wondrous revelations, even beholding Him face to face, nay even the attainment of the eight fold divine attributes[1] - all these excellent bliss for which he strove, pined for on earth have been left behind.

Desires, discrimination of good and bad[2] pleasure in the company of the Lord's saints, allurements of pretty maids gladsome realisation of the all pervasive light - of what purport are these to an emancipated soul in oneness with the ultimate reality? The kaleidoscopic changes of life cease to be attractive. Are these

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1. The Siddhanta gives eight divine attributes; " Self existence, essential purity, insuitive wisdom, infinite intelligence, essential freedom from all bonds, infinite grace or love omnipotence and infinite enjoyment or bliss. Vide Saiva Siddhanta, its substance attributed by Suryanarayana Sastri.

2. Vide Ode to Tirukkalukkunram :468,3: '*என்வினை யொத்தபின்*'. This is known as " Iruvinai Oppu " ie. " The balance of good and evil deeds. A state of equanimity that results when the sense of 'likes and dislikes' is eliminated. It denotes a high mark in spiritual development when stone and gold, friend and foe, wealth and want, fame and scorn are valued alike."

not the phases of feelings of separate selfhood? The poet sweeps through the gomut of alternate stress and glory and in his beatific state finds that supreme achievement and complete cessation of experience are *One.* The other interpretation is that these are judged by the scales of pure wisdom and accepted at their intrinsic worth[1]. Pope's translation of line 31 of stanza 642 does not carry the conviction of truth, both poetic and philosophic.

"The thought of damsels bright of eye shall then rejoice - shall it not be?"[2]

This interpretation is not consistent with the rest of the poem, unless we take Dr. Pope's translation to mean in this way. The heights and depths of his experiences on earth which the poet reviewed while taking his farewell for eternity, which while being possible even in the advaitha state, are transcended by him.

Life has been viewed by poet - philosophers from many angles of visions. Shelley said that life like a dome of many coloured glass stains the white radiance of eternity. To the religious poets of India, Life's consummation was in the emancipation of the soul and its union with Siva. In this blessed state, the white radiance of infinite bliss streams through it unchecked and extremes of sublimity and simplicity are seen to meet, and the riddles of life are solved.[3]

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1. Vide Professor K. Subramanya Pillai's Edition of Tiruvasagam.
2. Vide Dr. Pope's Tiruvasagam - page 346.
3. Cf. St: Thayumanavar - வேண்டாம் விருப்பும் வெறுப்பும் அந்த வில்லங்கத்தாலே விளையுஞ் சனனம் - ஆனந்தக் களிப்பு 24

The soul and the Lord apparently distinct, but in fact nondual, the soul owing its intelligence wholly to Him, and finally by His grace merging in Him[1] in Advaita. He, all the while remaining unaffected as the magnet is unaffected by the iron which it energises or as the sun by the flowers which open under the genial influence of its rays – this is the doctrine of the Siddhantam, so ably expounded in Siva Gnana Botham, the greatest of Saiva scriptures in South India. The music and the poetry of this doctrine, we get in Tiruvasagam. The divine love (para - bhakthi) is based on the soul's recognition of the non-duality and of its debt to the Lord. The Lord in 'advaita' with the soul, enables it not only to know external objects but also to know itself and Him.

This song is the expression of that Highest love, and of the realisation of 'advaita'. After wearisome toils, through mortal coils the young, wise, attractive minister of state to the Pandyan King has changed his garb of mortality and donned on the vesture of highest gnana, and love. He has attained "Equality, Liberty and Fraternity." It is the servant of old addressing the master, as in "நீத்தல் விண்ணப்பம்" Canto. Is it the 'தலைவி' the loving mate complaining to her beloved as in 'Asai pathu,' or kuyil Ode? Here is an equal a free lover in the midst of brethren, addressing his Beloved Father. Distinctions fade away for he seeth his beloved everywhere. 'கண்ணிற் காண்பதும் காட்சி' says Thayumanavar echoing the resonant melody of Tiruvasagam. "Whatever the eye seeth is Thou. Whatever the hand

1. Introduction. Siva Gnana Botham by J. M. Nallaswamy Pillai.

doeth is Thy worship. What the mouth uttereth is Thy praise. The earth and other elements and all living things are Thy gracious forms, O Lord."

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## 50. ஆனந்த மாலை: THE GARLAND OF JOY.

*Place:* Thillai.

*Quintessence:* The Desire for mystic Union.

In the last lyric of 'sweetness and light', we saw the thrill of expectation at the attainment of Bliss, vibrating through every line of the poem. When the poet's gaze turns from eternity to the finite world, then he realises poignantly that material impediments still overpower him. (The idea of "Prarathavinai" 'பிராரத்தவினை' that as long as the soul is fettered in the body, consummation with the Lord is not possible). In this poem, he expresses his intense desire for mystic union, his inability to wait any longer, in moving language where pathos and joy are inextricably blended. That it should be entitled as "The Garland of joy" seems an inconsistency to the reader who finds in it the saddest expression of a bliss yet unattained. In the Holy victory 'திருப்படையாட்சி' poem, his soul was transported into such pure pleasure that it flows as an undercurrent, bubbling beneath the surface even in this poem. The poet expresses his revels in 'Ananda', ineffable bliss, indirectly by dwelling on the powerlessness of kriyasakti. In the purest, highest range of contemplation he weaves the 'garland of joy' and lays it at the flowery feet of the Lord of Ananda, like the other immortal 'Bhaktas' - 'பூங்கழல்கள் அடைந்தார் கடந்தார் வியனுலகம்'. The title thus seems appropriate

and supports our view that the order of the lyrics in 'Tiruvasagam' is based on the poet's emotional content on the psychology of his feelings. There is the unbroken flow of pushing onward, towards the goal. Man has shed his mortal grossness in the poem on the Holy Victory (49) and the following lyric (50) contains the absolute desire of the soul of man to unite with the Absolute Lord. "*இனியுன்னைக் கூடும்வண்ண மியம்பாயே*" ***(643: 4).***

The poet is conscious that the failure to assimilate the bliss of consummation is his, "*என்னால் அறியாப் பதந்தந்தாய்*" and not the Lord's lack of love "*உன்னால் ஒன்றுங் குறைவில்லை.*" The life of man truly is like a puppet show "*தோலின் பாவைக் கூத்தாட் டத்தாய்*"(645) and is contrasted with the life of a consecrated soul, whom the Lord drew in love, taught wisdom, and revealed Himself - "*மாலுங்காட்டி வழிகாட்டி வாரா உலக நெறியேயுக் கோலங்காட்டி ஆண்டானைக் கொடியேன் என்றோ கூடுவதே*" ***(645).*** How touchingly, he expresses his greatest yearning. "*குருமணியே! படுவேன் படுவதெல்லாம் நான்பட்டாற் பின்னைப் பயனென்னே*" - ***(646)*** My Guru Gem! If I am doomed to so much suffering now, and there is no way out of it, of what use is the prospect of any gain afterwards?

A child's appeal always moves the heart of a mother to tender compassion. If the Divine Mother does not cherish me, I shall become a weakling and won't I perish then? Show me Thy goodness for my trust is on Thee. Thou art My refuge, my mother. Hast Thou no mercy upon me? Thou took me once in Thy fold. Now is there no place for me? – "*தாயே என்றுன் தாளடைந்தேன் தயாநீ என்பாலில்லையே, நாயேன் அடிமை உடனாக ஆண்டாய் நான்தான் வேண்டாவோ*" (647).

"Who shall be my comfort, if Thou dost not take pity on me, Ah! Lord of Thillai" "*அவா வென்னாவிடி லென்னை அஞ்சேல் என்பார் ஆரோதான்......தில்லை நடமாடி திகைத்தேன் இனித்தான் தேற்றாயே*" *(648)*. The poet has faith that the peerless splendour will come to his support at a time when he knows not what to do—"*செய்வதொன்றும் அறியேனே தெரிய அரிய பரஞ்சோதி*" *(649)*.

What sublime love! The poet's last, poignant appeal to light him to the life of bliss in the Lord.

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## 51. *அச்சோப் பதிகம்*: THE LYRIC OF RELEASE.

*Place*: Thillai.

*Quintessence*: The marvels of attainment.

His life-long appeal is answered. Release at last! If the lyric on Victory *திருப்படையாட்சி* is one of the exquisite gems of poetry, the 'lyric of release' *அச்சோப் பதிகம்* is one of the finest interpretation of poetry in religion.

We had glimpses of the nature of release in *கண்டபத்து (31.1)* and in the temple lyric (394.22) but in this last poem of Tiruvasagam, the ideal of Mukti is delineated in matchless poetry.

The poet reviews his whole life experiences, the fierce struggles against the ways of the flesh, the amazing transfiguration from the spirit of heaviness to that of buoyant joy. The main idea is the wondrous work of divine grace within him—"*அத்தனெனக் கருளியவாறார் பெறுவார் அச்சோவே.*"

In stanza 650, we get the vision of "Tirupperun thurai." Before his conversion, he was in the company of men of erudition and philosophers and found no happiness there. Then the Lord of Perunthurai revealed to him the path of love. At the close of his great song of songs - the poet's voice is calm and gentle, as he mused on the tranquil joys of attaining the feet of the Lord out of the bondage of ignorance and passion into the liberty of love and light, through the way of love.

> "Long I strove with 'ignoramus' who knew not the truth. The path of love He showed and cleansed me of my sins reft me from the bonds of the mind and consecrated. Who could plum the riches of His Grace that was mine Oh, the wonder of it!

During his journey to the Lord, he endured periods of gloom when the face of the Lord was hid as well as he saw the splendo of light when world was transfigured in the radiance of His love. Then came crowning bliss of emancipation when the soul, "finally set free from the influence of the threefold defilement, through the Grace of Siva, obtains divine wisdom, and so rises to live eternally in the conscious, full enjoyment of Siva's presence, in conclusive bliss."

Come Thou Lord of Grace and hence vain deluding joys!–*சிறுநெறிகள் சேராமே திருவருளேசேரும் வண்ணம் (651)*[1]". In unfathomable love, He took me, and freed me from the weariness of existence—"*எண்ணமிலா அன்பருளி எனையாண்டு.*"

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1. Vide Thayumanavar — *காண்பேனோ வென்கண்ணி (11)* "*வாதவூராளிதனை வான் கருணையால் விழுங்கும் போதவூரேறே! நின் பொன்னடியுங் காண்பேனோ?*"

Thus we see that love illuminates all his feelings, thoughts and acts and leads him to the Great Path of Truthful wisdom—*தூயநெறியே சேரும் வண்ணம்* (653). "Benumbed by the pangs of sorrow I stood: Then I gained the light of Thy healing Grace"- *நெஞ்சாயதுயர் கூரநிற்பேன் உன் அருள்பெற்றேன் (654)*. Man can never be saved by his own efforts. The Master-Guru must bid him 'come' and extend his loving protection- *உய்ஞ்சேனான் உடையானே அடியேனை வருக என்றஞ் சேலென் றருளிய வாருர் பெறுவார் அச்சோவே (654).*

Fleeting is the body. Fleeting too are the ravishing sensual pleasure and how can the soul be cleansed of all its stains? The Guru lead me out of the mire gently as a physician would lead a paralytic patient - பையவே கொடு போந்து–with wondrous love. He massages my pain and frees the knotty bars of bondage "*பாசமெனுந் தாழுருவி.*" How soothing and suggestive! Then He taught me the way of Bliss exactly as a sick man should know the secrets of health. The way to Bliss is sure, if a strong cord of intimate love binds me with the source of Excellence; "*ஓங்காரத்துட் பொருளே*" *(656).*

What T. S. Eliot says in his study of Dante's Divine comedy, can well be applied to the poet of Tiruvasagam: "Nowhere in poetry has experience so remote from ordinary experience been expressed so concretely. One can feel the awe at the power of the master who could thus at every moment realise the inapprehensible in visual images. It is the utmost power of the poet. How scant the speech and how faint for my conception?" How true is this criticism of Tiruvasagam!

In the last stanza, he poignantly recalls his experiences. From the lowest, last step of degradation

(so full of humiliation is a true devotee) the Lord took him as something worth and elevated, nay exalted him, like a dog lifted in a fine chariot.

"நம்மையும் ஓர்பொருளாக்கி நாய்சிவிகை ஏற்றுவித்த
அம்மை யெனக்கருளிய வாறார் பெறுவார் அச்சோவே"

"The peerless, matchless divine mother, gave me grace - Who is so blessed like myself? Oh, wonder of wonders!" 658.

Thus on this holy note of wonder, closes Tiruvasagam the pilgrimage of the poet from the Finite கட்டுநிலை with his soul chanting 'Namacivaya' to the Infinite வீட்டுநிலை where he learnt the significance of 'Sivayanama.' The poet brings out the different relationships in which he stood to the Lord, at different stages of his Progress. He calls Him as the Father (650), the Mystic Dancer (651), the Gracious Lord (652), the lofty peerless Giver (653), the Master (654), the Blissful (655), the loving Guru (656), the primal source and the tender Mother (658). The poet in turn becomes the child, the humble devotee, the ardent disciple, the weary beggar, the servant till He is drawn to Him in mystic union, the rasa of 'Santhi' ably expounded by Abinarabharati fills our being absolutely with peace, pefect peace.

The spiritual relations this poem communicates - relations not easily detached for separate consideration from the total experience of the poem but which we may recall in some such form as this: The beauty of a life of love, the glory of the divine grace acting upon the heart of man, revealing his weakness, the wonder of the life in God renewed after the stagnation on earth and lastly the sublimity of the word that can make immortal, the eternal word.

In அச்சோபத்திகம் or The Lyric of Release," the poet, we find, is laid asleep in body and becomes a living soul. It is of such heavenly bliss, that Wordsworth says:

"And all affections, by communion raised
From earth to heaven, from human to divine."

The subtle witchery of joy is caught in the Poem where words are as: 'In an organ, from one blast of wind, to many a row of pipes, the sound breathes!'

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## H

## THE ADVAITIC EXPERIENCE AS POETRY.

George Santayana in "Interpretations of poetry and Religion," says that Religion and poetry are identical in essence and differ merely in the way in which they are attached to practical affairs.

In our best study of poetry, are we sensible that the criticism of poetry in the study of things spiritual? M. Bremond in "Prayer and poetry" says that "all art constantly aspires to the condition of poetry; if they are as truly poetry, they are more truly prayers."

Indian poets conceived poetry as a kind of philosophy touched with emotion. The poet is the prophet of the world's final causes; the interpreter of a creation groaning and traveiling after its proper meanings. The poet sees the infinite Truth in his most exalted and entranced moods and spends his less exalted moments in giving form and expression to his realisations. The ideal of poesy wherein Song and Self-realisation become one in joy is of the essence of Indian conception of the mission of art. It is in the fitness of things that

aesthetic delight and spiritual bliss are expressed by the suggestive word "Rasa." In India is found the golden link between Poetry, Religion and Philosophy.

A profound response to great poetic themes can be secured only living with such themes, dwelling and brooding upon them, choosing these moments when the mind seems spontaneously to open itself to their influence.[1]

Manikkavasagar's Tiruvasagm, like Dante's Divine Comedy sees the light of day from a passionate personal experience; yet the accepted religious background - comprising the Almighty, Soul and the World and their intimate relationship, the wonderful emancipation of the soul, the vision of its mystic union with God, - is presented by the Poet in Tiruvasagam as an intimate experience, expressed with a technique which conveys his exultation of reason, emotion and faith in living in the sense of Truth.

In reading Dante, we must enter the world of 13th century catholicism. We are not called upon to *believe* what Dante believed but we are called upon more and more to understand it. The vital matter is that 'Divine Comedy' is a whole; that we must in the end come to understand every part in order to understand any part.[2] In the same way, Tiruvasagam gives us not merely a coherent system of Philosophy which in later years came to be known as "Saiva Siddhanta", but also the individual throb of emotional realisation, in which, by means of that system, a man feels he understands and can love the inmost reality of things. The

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1. Vide Keat's letters to Reynolds.
2. Vide Dante by T. S. Eliot.

poet's *feeling* of the truth of what he related seems more interfused with the poem's values.

Maud Bodkin says[1] "So far as Plato or Vergil, Milton or Dante, by the power and magic of speech lights up for me these symbols so that with the poet exult in fuller possession and mastery of my life's experience, so far, I response to the poem with full public faith."

Manikkavasagar lived in the centre of the religious depths of "Saivaism," and his poem contains conceptions as are taken over from the religious beliefs of his day, yet its poetic value rests on the release of the personal and emotional experience of the poet. In his poem, he is moved to express all the moods - grand and depressing moments of himself. Tiruvasagam is unique because universal types of experience and images of almost universal range are realised in fullness through the medium of poetry and the poet's experience has special relations to religion and philosophy.

In our study of the poem, we have tried to show that approach through poetry can bring new light to bear upon the great truths that appear in religious experience.

What is the sum total of the spiritual heritage communicated by Manikkavasagar? 'Does the thought and imagery in Tiruvasagam constitute a satisfying expression of the permanent vital experience of the poet? However one may try to avoid the personal note, and attempt to analyse one's own response by the

1. Vide' Archetypal Patterns in Poetry-Chapter on "Heaven and Hell" by Maud Bodkin. The Profession of Poetry by Garmod.

judgement of others, yet it is the testimony of individual feeling that one must in the end put forward. That we may participate in the "Truth and Beauty" of Tiruvasagam, we must be emotionally responsive to the technique through which attitudes and imagery of the poet's experience are evoked.

The peculiar relationship of the Lord with the soul, the thirst that from the soul doth rise to realise the bliss in the Lord, this forms the quintessence of the poetry and philosophy of Tiruvasagam. The truth of the "Adwaita" is immortalised by Manikkavasagar in his poem.

"The Saiva Siddhanta," said T. N. Sargunar in International Review of Missions, Vol. II "Possesses by for the richest literature and holds the greatest place in the life of South India."

The charm of Tiruvasagam lies in the perfect harmony between the poet's beliefs, and his own experience which contributes to the poetic element; and as such it evokes a far greater appeal than the abstract philosophical treatises as the Meykanda Sastras.

The transition from the human to the divine, from time to the eternal, from the many to the one, and such experiences of the poet are interpreted by the *emotional symbolism*, liberated by the power of Manikkavasagar's poetry. The poet resorts to allegories, metaphors and similes direct and implied, proverbial sayings and deviations in poetic craftsmanship as the change of metre and form of address (Swabadesam and Annyābadesam) devices of sending messages through kuyil and parrot, adopting the folk lore of

the peasants, or the technique of "Agaturai" and symbolism and imagery current during his day and gleaned from the puranas and scriptures - these are the aids to evoke the right feelings of the yearning of the soul, to realise its goal. The poet, like anothar mystic poet of the West William Blake[1] uses symbols chosen *within* the common experience of the reader to tell him about something *without*.

It is interesting to analyse the way in which the poet has built up and beautified *with recurrences* and no one can equal Manikkavasagar in the unique use of this poetic technique of repetition of words, ideas and experiences the elaboration of a symphony in which God, soul and world participate, and mingle in their true relationship. The communication of this realisation is conveyed in the highest poesy, in Tiruvasagam.[2]

In the poet's own words, his poem is a magnificent garland of praise to the supreme one.

> ஒரு நாமம் ஓருருவம் ஒன்றுமில்லார்க்கு ஆயிரம்
> திரு நாமம் பாடிநாம் தெள்ளேணம் கொட்டாமோ

Let us sing the thousand names of the one who has no name, no form (235. 3-4).

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1. Blake: "What is the price of Experience? Do men buy it for a song? Or wisdom for a dance in the street? No, it is bought with the price of all that a man hath, his home, his wife, his children. Wisdom is sold in the desolate market where none come to buy and in the withered field where the farmer ploughs for bread in vain."

2. போற்றித்திருவகவல்: "பிழைப்புவாய்ப் பொன்றறியா நாயேன் குழைத்த சொன்மாலை கொண்டருள்போற்றி(220)
Vide மாணிக்கவாசகர் வரலாறு by Swami Vedachalam.

In Tiruvandap Paghuthi (திருவண்டப் பகுதி) is described the nature of the world which undergoes the process of birth, development and decay. These are due to and controlled by an Intelligent Being. "சிறிய வாகப் பெரியோன் - He is the supreme One who exists in the minutest atoms." He is the 'Ancient One' (பழையோன்) who causes the process of Involution and Evolution through His Sakti which operates by taking many forms. The subordinate agents of creation, preservation and dissolution are all animated by Him:

*படைப்போற் படைக்கும் பழையோன் படைத்தவை*
*காப்போற் காக்குங் கடவுள் காப்பவை*
*கரப்போன் கரப்பவை கருதா......* *(3. 13-15)*

In Tiruvasagam we find constant references to the fact that the Deities, entrusted with the world processes, called Creator, Protector and Destroyer do not know him - "மூவரும் அறிகிலர் யாவர் மற்றறிவார்" (375). Hence at the end of the Involution, the God that remains unaffected by it should be its author. கற்பமும் இறுதியுங் கண்டோன் காண்க - "He discerns the aeon and its end." 'Eternal source of all'

*தேவர்கோ அறியாத தேவதேவன்*
*செழும் பொழில்கள் பயந்து காத்தழிக்கும் மற்றை*
*மூவர்கோனாய் நின்ற முதல்வன் மூர்த்தி*
*மூதாதை மாதாளும் பாகத்தெந்தை.*

He is the God of Gods, not perceived by the King of Gods (Indra)
He is the Supreme King of the Triad, who create, sustain and destroy the worlds.
He is the Murti (the manifest God) the ancient ancestor My father and Siva-Sakti (5.3.34)

By process of time, things reduce themselves to the unformed "prematter basic substratum" and rise again taking forms from it.

What is the purpose of evolution? God is self luminous 'சோதியனே'. He does not do it for His sport, but he causes it for the benefit of the souls. In the Sivapuranam, we are told that as the result of evolution, souls take their bodies, dwell in them, leave them and thus undergo the cycle of births and deaths.

*புல்லாகிப் பூடாய்ப் புழுவாய் மரமாகி...............*
*எல்லாப் பிறப்பும் பிறந்திளைத்தேன் எம்பெருமான்(26-31)*

The soul is plunged in ignorance, which is called spiritual darkness. From this state, the soul is lead progressively through the weary cycle of births and deaths, to the realisation of God's bliss.

*... ... ... வல்வினையேன் றன்னை*
*மறைத்திட மூடிய மாய இருளை*
*அறம்பாவ மென்னும் அருங்கயிற்றாற் கட்டி*
*... ... ... புழு அழுக்குமூடி*
*... ... ... விமலா உனக்குக்*
*கலந்த அன்பாகிக் கசிந்துள் ளுருகும்*
*நலந்தா னிலாத சிறியேற்கு நல்கி*
*நிலந்தன் மேல் வந்தருளி.*

The soul is given countless embodiments to progress from the thraldom of darkness, to the Light of God. If evolution[1] is necessary to perfect the soul,

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1. Chief sources of Reference: St. Manikkavasagar: Life and Times by Swami Vedachalam; Sivagnanabodbam of Meikandadeva by J. M. Nahaswamy Pillai (1895); The Saiva school of Hinduism by Shivapadasundaram; மெய்கண்டாரும், சிவஞானபோதமும் by கா. சுப்பிரமணிய பிள்ளை; Saiva Siddantham by Prof. K. Subramania Pillai M. A. M. L.; The Saiva Siddanta- its Religion & Philosophy by Swami Vedachalam; சிவஞானசுவாமிகள் அருளிச்செய்த சிவஞான பாடியம்,

involution is needed for providing the soul with the required rest after its spell of activity, so that it may rise up with vigour renewed to pursue its course to the goal of divine bliss. Thus 'Involution and Evolution have the purpose of the spiritual progress of the soul. Yet the Lord Almighty, transcends these processes.

"போக்கிலன் வரவிலன்" - Thou goest not nor Come'st. This idea is worked out most exquisitely in the poem (20) திருப்பள்ளி யெழுச்சி - The Morning Hymn, where the poet employs the customary practice of waking the Lord from sleep - "பள்ளிஎழுந் தருளாயே"

The *world* and *souls* are eternal is the view of Manikkavasagar. The soul is an intelligent entity. The mind and the senses help to energise the intelligence of the soul and the organs of activity make the soul active. When joined to the body, it is completely identified with the body. When united to the Lord, it is completely identified with the Lord. Thus it identifies itself with anything that comes in contact with it.

The soul's intelligence is rendered dormant by the bond of darkness called 'Anavam', and in the process of births, the instruments of the soul, help to remove in part - "இருளகற்றி" (47. 627). When the soul acts in the body, the good and the bad results of its deeds are termed Karma. Maya which provides the agents for the development of the soul, does not help the soul to understand the Lord, beyond its ken. The finite cannot perceive the Infinite. Therefore Maya is viewed as a bond, because it limits the soul's vision. The soul in combination with Anavam and Maya, directs its

actions, not always in the right way - வேற்று விகார விடக் குடம்பினுட் கிடப்ப (1. 84). The poet compares the might of delusion to the tempestuous billows- "கடலின் திரையதுபோல் வருகலக்கம் மலம் அறுந்தென்" (34. 511). Thus the soul gets entangled in the mesh of its deeds, and 'Karma' is thus said to be one of the bonds. "இருள் திணிந்தெழுந் திட்டதோர் வல்லனைச் சிறுகுடி லித்தைப் பொருளெனக் களித்து" (28. 437)- I mistook as delightful the hovel with dense darkness and the result of strong deeds. Hence we find that Anava, Maya and Karma are said to be the three bonds of the soul which should be got rid of, if the soul should realise bliss.

'மூலமாகிய மும்மலம் அறுக்கும்' (2, 111)
'உள்ள மல மூன்றும் மாய' (48. 629)

Socrates solved the mystery of life by his penetrating questions. So also Manikkavasagar asks a number of questions in his poem and these live in our memory, and haunt us by their sweet fragrance – நானார் என்னுள்ளமார் .... என்னையாரறிவார் (10. 216); எது எமைப் பணிகொளு மாறது (20. 374). The poet's challenging questions, Who am I and who is my soul? Who can know me? Or of what service are we to Thee? lead up to the great question he puts forward in his poem, "Who are they who can know God?" யாருன்னையறிய கிற்பாரே (22. 394).

God cannot be realised with the aid of the mind or the senses. The lens of the world cannot perceive the Infinite One. If the Lord pervades the world, it must be through His divine Mercy and Wisdom. The soul can know Him only if it turns its gaze to the light of the world - God can be realised through 'His Grace'- "அவனருளாலே அவன்றாள் வணங்கி" (1, 18). When

the soul turns away from the world and ceases to live a purely objective existence -"பொய்யனேன் நான் உண்டுடுத்திங்கிருப்பதானேன்" (*5. 6. 56*), and turns towards God, it reaches the stage when the Grace of the Lord can operate on it.

யானே பொய் யென்னெஞ்சும் பொய்யென் னன்பும்பொய்
ஆனால் வினையேன் அழுதால் உன்னைப் பெறலாமே
(*5. 9. 94*)

"I am false; my mind is false; false too is my love
Yet if I weep, shall not this sinner attain Thee?"

It is here that God's Grace begins to act upon the soul who is then able to realise the Lord.

பொருத்தமின் மையேன் பொய்ம்மை யுண்மையேன்
போத என்றெனைப் புரிந்து நோக்கவும்
வருத்த மின்மையேன் (*5. 10. 97*)

" I did not deserve anything better: Truly, I was false:
But when Thou bads't me come with gentle glance,
My sufferings ceased."

In such a stage appears the God Guru to give *it* spiritual illumination. The soul is thus emancipated from the bonds, by the beauteous Grace of the Lord. The poet hailed the advent of this God Guru and his spiritual enlightenment in many a gem of rare beauty in Tiruvasagam.

காட்டாதன வெல்லாங் காட்டிச் சிவங்காட்டித்
தாள்தா மரைகாட்டித் தன்கருணைத் தேன்காட்டி
நாட்டார் நகைசெய்ய நாம் மேலை வீடெய்த
ஆள்தான் கொண்டாண்டவா பாடுதுங்காண் அம்மானாய்
(*180*)

The experience of the poet is given the greatest prominence in Tiruvasagam. The finest poetry is embedded in the passages dealing with this crucial emotional realisation of the poet. The Lyrics "Tiru-Ammanai, Tirut Tellenam, The Temple Psalm (கோயிற் றிருப்பதிகம்), Tiruccadagam-sections 8, 9, & 10, Tirukkothumbi etc abound with suggestive 'Rasa' of the highest poetry. This is the stage where the vision of the soul is connected to that of the Lord. This relationship of the Lord with the soul as realised so poignantly and powerfully by the poet, constitutes the magical wondrous charm of Tiruvasagam. "At what distance am I and my mind from my Lord?" - "நானும் என் சிந்தையும் நாயகனுக் கெவ்விடத்தோர்" *(10. 229).* That is the eternal question that has puzzled the greatest and wisest philosophers of all ages but our poet solves the answer, through poesy in his immortal Tiruvasagam. The truth of the 'Advaita' is proved beyond a doubt and the whole realisation is much more vivid in its inward texture and flow, in its poetic garb, than in any philosophical treatise of the "Samaya Kurevars." Where philosophy uses abstraction, poetry uses suggestion and makes communication more complete.

The initiation by the Guru at Tirupperunthurai marks the freed state of wisdom in the spiritual development of the poet. In the heritage of wisdom that was his, we trace four steps[1] called Sariyai, Kiriyai, Yogam and Gnanam. In the hundred stanzas in Tiruccadagam (திருச்சதகம்) we get a wondrous epitome of the poet directly listening to the word of God and it is indicated as 'Kettal' (கேட்டல்). This is

1. Vide 'Saiva Siddhantam' by Prof. K. Subramania Pillai.

called Sariyai in Gnanam. The Guru expounds to His disciple on the ten steps leading to the purification of the soul.[1] The contemplation of the received upathesam is Kiriyai in Gnanam which is termed 'Sindithal' - *சிந்தித்தல்*. Sivapuranam and the three Agavals can be classified under this category. Yogam in Gnanam is the attainment of 'Vairagya' in truth and this intense concentration is known as "Thelithal"- '*தெளிதல்*'. The mystical poems as '*பிடித்தபத்து*' '*குழைத்தபத்து*' '*அச்சப்பத்து*' reveal this stage of the poet. Finally the realisation of God and His bliss is termed the highest stage of Gnanam in Gnanam, and is technically known as '*சிட்டைகூடல்*' which represents the final stage of evolution for the human soul on earth. '*கோயிற்றிருப் பதிகம்*' and '*திருப்படையாட்சி*' are examples of poems *that belong to this class, where the poet has attained a* capacity to look at the soul, the world and the Lord in their proper relationship. In the above mentioned poems, 22 and 49, we reach the high water mark of poetry and philosophy where the poet has clothed in *sublime poetry the fleeting character and the futility* of the world, his own absolute dependence on the Lord, His illimitable Grace and Love and at whose Feet he seeks refuge from the anguish of existence.

Now let us examine some of the characteristic poetic concepts and imagery that Manickavasagar uses in Tiruvasagam to convey his progressive realisation from 'Cariyai Gnanam' to '*Gnanam in Gnanam*'.

The symbol of sounds and words is frequently referred to by our poet in order to evoke the ideal of contemplation "சிந்தித்தல்". The poem commences

1. This is dealt in detail in the section on 'Tiruccadagam' in the Thesis - Section D.

with the salutation[1] to the Lord represented by the mantra, 'Namasivaya,' in Siva Puranam where the poet emphasises the idea of his fixation in the world. Towards the journey's end, this mantra becomes 'Sivayanama'[2] (38.555) 'சி' is the symbol for Sivam; 'வ' connotes His Grace, that guides the soul to the Feet of the Lord; 'ய' stands for the soul; 'ந' denotes the veiling power of Siva, which causes the soul to act in the world, and 'ம' signifies the bond that binds the soul to the fetter of the world. The soul's tendency to identify with whatever it comes in contact with has been revealed most effectively in this symbol. If the soul turns to "நம" it plunges into misery. If it contacts with 'வ' it will be lifted up to God.

> 'உய்யுமாறென்றென் றெண்ணி
> அஞ்செழுத்தின் புணைபிடித்துக் கிடக்கின்றேனை'
> *(5.331)*
>
> "What is the way for Escape? I thought -
> And held fast to the raft of Thy five letters."

The contemplation of Panchatcharam of five letters is essential to remind the soul of the need to give up the world and concentrate on God's Grace and so we pass on to the third stage of 'தெளிதல்.' Here the soul submits its knowledge and action and takes shelter under the *Feet of God* which represents the mighty wisdom and activity of the Lord. Some of the most melting, plaintive strains of poesy, distilled from the flame of emotions, embody this stage of Yoga Gnanam:

> அன்றே யென்றன் ஆவியும் உடலும் உடைமை எல்லாமும்
> என்னையாட்கொண்ட போதே கொண்டிலையோ
> இன்றோர் இடையூறெனக் குண்டோ (502)

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1. நமச்சிவாய வாழ்க. 2. Vide Section B of the Thesis.

'That ray, my soul my body and my all
Did'st Thou not take, when Thou made me Thine
Now, should there be any obstacle for me?

'வேண்டேன் புகழ் வேண்டேன் செல்வம்
வேண்டேன் இறைதாள்
பூண்டேன் புறம் போகேன் இனிப்புறம்
போகவொட்டேனே' (34.512)

"Fame I ask not: Nor crave I for wealth
The Lord's feet, I have donned
I shall not swerve, and will not part from it again"

How beautifully, the poet has brought out the force of the idea of God's wisdom and activity through Grace, by means of the concept - இறைதாள். Throughout the poem the symbolic terms of "திருவடி, சேவடி, எந்தையடி, பூங்கழல், பெய்கழல், அருட்கழல்" – are applied with equal felicity to reveal the greatest truth of Saiva Siddhanta i. e., the doctrine of the Grace of God. The concept of the Gracious Feet of the Lord is rich with the promise of all that is most blessed.

'புவனியிற் சேவடி தீண்டினன் காண்க' (3 61)
'His roseate foot, this earth hath trod.'
'பூவா ரடிச்சுவ டென்றலைமேல் பொறித்தலுமே
தேவான வாபாடி' (241)
"When His flowery Feet were placed on my head
Such Divine bliss was mine – Sing we."
'கவலைக் கெடுத்துக் கழலிணைகள் தந்தருளும்
செயலைப் பரவி' (251)
"He gave His Feet as refuge and banished my care
His gracious acts, we praise."

Thus the symbol unfolds the beauty of absolute submission of the soul, in which state, it remains safe and happy, freed from the afflication of evils of birth,

'பாவநாச உன்பாதமே யல்லால்
பற்றுநான் மற்றிலேன் கண்டாய்' (28.456)

Manikkavasagar knows of no other attachment but that of His sacred Feet – The poet's love soars on intense feeling when he says that having quaffed to choking point, the ambrosial waters of grace (94.165–175) he is not able to attain the Feet of his Flawless Gem, in mystic union.

.... ... பாடிப்பாடிப்பணிந்து பாதப்
பூப்போதணைவ தென்றுகொலோ என் பொல்லா
மணியைப் புணர்ந்தே (27.447)

The concept of the " Feet of God," is the nearest we can get, to the reality of the intimate relationship of God with man. It makes us concentrate on the one eternal Truth, of God's Transcendency and Immanence. Through His Five fold acts, He energises the world and the heart of man.

" .... .... நின் ஆதியாம் பாதமலர்
... .... நின் அந்தமாம் செந்தளிர்கள்
.... .... எல்லாவுயிர்க்குந் தோற்றமாம் பொற்பாதம்
.... ... உயிர்க்கும் போகமாம் பூங்கழல்கள்
.... .... உயிர்க்கும் ஈறாம் இணையடிகள்
.... ... மால் நான்முகனும் காணாத புண்டரிகம்
.... .... உய்ய ஆட் கொண்டருளும் பொன்
மலர்கள் போற்றியாம்." (7.184)

Hail to the feet's flower, Thou Transcendent One
Hail to the roseate Feet, Thou Immanent One

Hail to the Golden Feet, the source of Life [1]
Hail to the flowery Feet, the Joy of Life [2]
Hail to the twain Feet, the end of Life [3]
Hail to the Lotus flower, unseen by Mal and Brahma[4]
Hail to the Golden flowers that made us His in Grace [5]

When the poet gives himself wholly to the superemacy of divine Grace and wants to remain in advaitic contact with God, having nothing to know or do save under the guidance of God's Grace, he cries out: 'தருக நின் பாதம் போற்றி தமியனேன் தனிமை தீர்த்தே'

"That my lonely self may cease to feel forlorn
Grant me Thy Feet." (5.7.72)

This emotional realisation may be an apprehension of the truth more perfect than one gets by calling forth more abstract intellectual notions. Poetry such as we find in Tiruvasagam makes us see clearly the great reality represented by these symbols. Manikkavasagar gives special charm to his poetry by the fact of his having apprehended *directly* the tremendous reality of the One Supreme Lord, who is both transcendent as well as immanent. His people and his own experience blend into a single flame of consciousness and his poetry glows with undying truth and beauty, and evokes universal appeal.

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1. Signifies the act of Creation
2. ,, ,, Preservation
3. ,, ,, Dissolution
4. ,, ,, Illusion (Tirobava or veiling)
5. ,, ,; Granting Grace (Anugraha)

Cf. 'பூவினிற் கந்தம் பொருந்திய வாறுபோல'

Thirumanthiram 1459.

Interrelated personal and literary reminiscences, as found in the poem, contribute to a unified experience in the manner of fused association. When Manikkavasagar makes frequent references to the puranic stories like Thakkan's sacrifice, the search of Brahma and Vishnu for the 'Beginning and End' of the luminosity of Siva, the descent of the Ganges on Lord Siva's matted locks, the swallowing of the poison that rose from the Milk Ocean etc-stories that have taken shape in the tradition of the community, he utilises these to their full evocative power. Thus he attains for himself vision and possession of the experience engendered between his own soul and the life around him and communicates that experience at once, individual and collective to others so far as they can respond adequately to the words and images he uses. His poetry evokes universal appeal but his philosophy is understood only by these, who have lived and moved and had their being in the soil from where sprang the great Alwars, the Devaram poets, the authors of Siva Gnana Botham and Siva Gnana Siddiar and Tayumanavar, and who, however dimly, can perceive the underlying truth and unfading beauty of Manikkavasagar's progressive ascent to the advaitic bliss in the Lord - the last stage of "Gnanam in Gnanam."[1]

'Advaitam' is a term applied to God in the upanishads. It is associated with the diverse important systems of Philosophy. "Suddadvaitam" is the all mark of Saiva Siddhantam. This term is used to indicate the relation between God and souls. How is

1. மாணிக்கவாசகர் வரலாறு; சுவாமி வேதாசலம் Pages 94-98
2. செந்தமிழ்ச் செல்வி IX & XVI.

the soul related to God? In advaitam as in combination of the light of the sun with the power of the eye to see things.

In "Tiruvandap Paguthi" (திருவண்டப் பகுதி) Manikkavasagar sings of the Lord's splendour in filling all inseparably and surpassingly like the fragrance from the flower.

*பூவில் நாற்றம் போன்றுயர்ந் தெங்கும்*
*ஒழிவற நிறைந்து மேவிய பெருமை.* (3.115)

The flower in the earliest stage of a tender bud conceals all its fragrance within. When it develops to to the bud stage, then it gives the odour only to those who take it nearer the nose to smell it. But when the flower is fully blown out, it wafts its fragrance far and wide. This simile is worked out in the well known stanza 26. 436:

*உற்ற ஆக்கையின் உறுபொருள் நறுமலர் எழுதரு நாற்றம் போல்*
*பற்றலாவதோர் நிலையிலாப் பரம்பொருள்*

"Like the soul present in the body and the fragrance in the flower, the supreme (Param) pervades them and surpasses all." The soul is still confused to the body and the connection yields the soul only a fancied pleasure and not a lasting one, differing from the supreme who pervades all and surpasses all and who is all love and all bliss, ready to import the same to those who understand Him as such. When this great love is possessed, then that very moment, the fragrance of Sivam, (Ananda) will blow out of the flower of Siva- "சிவனுக்குள்ளே சிவமணம் பூத்தது" (Tirumular).

The advaita relation of God and the perfected soul (Tirumular) is like the advaita relation existing between fragrance and flower.

'யாவராயினும் அன்பரன்றி அறியொணாமலர்ச்சோதியான்
தூயமாமலர்ச் சேவடிக் கணஞ்சென்னி மன்னிச்சுடருமே'
(579)

The glorious splendour whom none can know save those that love on His pure blossom like Feet, my head doth rest in luminosity.

God who is immanent as the light, in the lotus flower of the heart, cannot be perceived except by those who love Him (as the sun's light is beheld by the light of our eyes). The pure, ineffable light of wisdom will penetrate through the mind and the illuminated (ஆன்மஒளி) soul will be in advaitic union with the effulgent light of God (பேரொளி) and enjoy bliss infinite.

The above quotation takes us to the consideration of the symbolism of Light in Tiruvasagam, particulary in relation to 'Advaita.'

In the first place, the Lord is addressed in manifold terms of light, throughout the poem;

'சொல்லும் பொருளும் இறந்த சுடரை' (27.441)
'The Light surpassing speech and content.'
'பத்திக் கடலுட் பதித்த பரஞ்சோதி' (11.246)
'The effulgent light that plunged me in the sea of devotion.'

'உள்ளத்துள் ஒளிர்கின்ற ஒளியே' (37.510)
The light that illumines the inner self.

From our response to light comes the realisation of God in His transcendental glory, and in His immanent benignity with the world and soul. The sun emanates feelings of sympathy and every living being responds to the sun's rays for it nourishes every living. Light thus becomes a symbol of supreme well-being - the factor of heightened vitality blended with the subtler cravings of the spirit. As the soul ascends higher and higher, brighter and brighter becomes the heavenly radiance.-'*எங்கும் நிறைந்தமு தூறுபரஞ்சுடர்*'(*19.612*).

The Light of God dispels the darkness of ignorance '*பொய்யிருள் கடிந்தமெய்ச் சுடரே*' (*390*). The God-Guru appeared to him as "*மெய்ச்சுடர்*" - the Light of truth, and the Light of wisdom "*ஒண் மலர்த்தாள் தந்து*" (5. 4. 43) and freed him from the pangs of birth.

> "*துன்பமே பிறப்பே இறப்பொடு மயக்காந்*
> *தொடக்கெலாம் அறுத்த நற்சோதி*" (*37. 545*)

> "Beauteous Light, that cut off my bonds of life -
> Pain, birth, death and delusion too."

Here the concentration of dazzling light implies the great glory of God who can cut away our attachments.[1]

The realisation of infinity is presented in terms of diffused light.

> "*பார்பதம் அண்டம் அனைத்துமாய் முளைத்துப்*
> *பரந்ததோர் படரொளிப் பரப்பே*" (*22. 395*)

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1. For a detailed exposition on the significance of the holy ash and the purifying light of Lord Siva, Vide Page 97 - **மாணிக்கவாசகர் வரலாறு** by Swami Vedachalam.

"All pervasive through earth, heaven and other worlds,
Thou expanse of light springs forth and spreads o'er all."

An emotional response to the Lord's ineffable bliss is evoked in

" ... ... ... உலவா இன்பச் சுடர் காண்பான்
அலந்து போனேன்" (32.485)

"Wandering I went to seek Thy gleam of fadeless bliss." The poet makes one of the contacts of poetry with religion when he brings the transcendent God into relation with man as an object of intellectual recognition in the lines:

"சோதியே சுடரே சூழொளி விளக்கே" (29.458)

O Splendour of Light! O resplendent flame!
O Lamp that sheds effulgent beams (29. 458)

and finally, with adoring Love, into the 'advaita' of eternal bliss in his sublime cry: "ஆனந்தம் ஆக்குமென் சோதி" - Thou changest all to ecstatic Joy, My Light Divine !

Manikkavasagar objectifies in Tiruvasagam, his experiences, potentially common to all but peculiarly deep and vivid to himself, and reveals the ideal reconcilement of opposite forces, by tracing the exact relationship of God with the soul and the world. The intuitions of religions are poetical and in such intuitions, poetry has its ultimate function. The highest poetry is that of the prophetic seers. The "poet of ruby utterances," sings the Song of Eternity with a clear and pure voice. His poetry is the outcome of

the spontaneous overflow of emotions. Poetry elevated to its heights is identical with religion grasped to its inmost Truth.

Manikkavasagar was a unique 'Jivan-Mukta' whose religion was all poetry, a poet whose pleasure was thought, nay, Love and Wisdom.

Tiruvasagam is a unique poem, which embodies in the most intense and complete form of emotional realisation, the 'incantation' of a living faith - a testament of "Advaita".